THE PASS

STEWART EDWARD WHITE

Henry Kinsman

to Grandpa

from Tracy

1956

THE PASS

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"A misstep would have tragic consequences."

See page 188

THE PASS

BY

STEWART EDWARD WHITE

Author of "The Blazed Trail," "The Forest,"
"The Mountains," etc., etc.

FRONTISPIECE IN COLOR BY FERNAND LUNGREN
AND MANY OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS
FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

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THE BIG MEADOW TRAIL

I

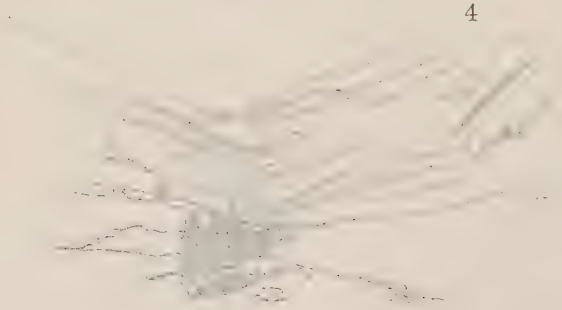
THE BIG MEADOW TRAIL

We had already been out about two months, Billy and Wes and I, and were getting short of grub. Wes took Dinkey and Jenny on a wide detour down to the six-thousand foot mark, where a little mill town afforded a chance of replenishing supplies. Billy and I, in charge of Buckshot and Old Slob and Calamity Jane, the diminutive mule, continued on the trail, under agreement to wait for Wes at Big Meadows.

Billy rode ahead on her brown pony, watching the landscape go by, peacefully leading the way. The three pack-horses followed more or less conscientiously. Bullet and I brought up the rear, I snap-

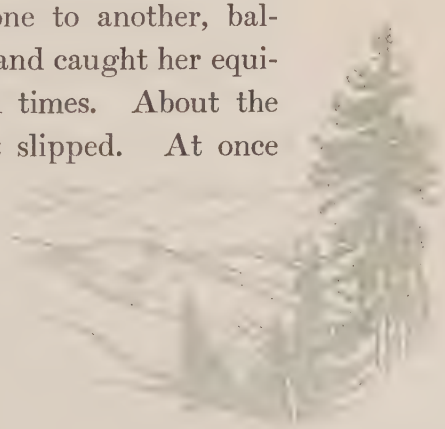
ping my slingshot and Bullet his teeth to keep Calamity Jane in the way she should go. Tuxana, the bull dog, and Pepper, the Airedale, were in and out of the brush discovering the most rapturous smells. That is the way one travels in the mountains.

We were about seventy-five hundred feet up and in the country typical of that elevation. Much of the trail was in the pine woods, but occasionally we skirted broad, open mountain sides. There grew manzanita and snow-bush, with bald rocks outcropping. When we came to such a hill we shook off the delicious state wherein a certain part of us—the part that had to do with horses and trail and lay of the country and pack-ropes—was wide awake and efficient, but in which all the rest of us was luxuriantly and indolently allowing the foreordained to take place; and began to look for deer. We did not want



to shoot them, but it was fun to see them. Then regretfully Tuxana and Pepper obeyed our orders and came to heel. But in a few moments again we entered the pines and the cedars and the huge Douglas spruces, where the mountain brooks leaped from one pool to another, and certain wild flowers lightened the shadows.

After a time we descended a deep cañon to a stream of considerable size. Obstructing it were boulders rounded by floods, white as the snow from which the waters about them came. At the ford it glittered with fool's gold, barbaric and splendid. The horses splashed through indifferently, but the dogs lamented on the further side of resolution. Finally they decided. Tuxana, characteristically, leaped from one stone to another, balanced with care, lost and caught her equilibrium a half dozen times. About the middle her hind feet slipped. At once



the current caught them. She clung desperately, her countenance agonized, but the stream was too strong for her. At last she had to let go and swim, whereupon the rapids caught her, battered her about and spewed her forth far below. Pepper, on the other hand, plunged in boldly, swam with all her strength, and managed to crawl out just above the beginning of the white water. Then they both shook themselves, beginning at the head and ending in a disgusted quiver at the tip of the tail.

After this we climbed steadily out of the cañon, following in a general way the course of a stream tributary to it. At first the trail led over the shoulder far above, but gradually the brook rose to our level, and so we found ourselves once more among the trees. The sun splashed through luxuriantly, Douglas squirrels ran up and down in an affectation of

haste, Calamity Jane loafed along, her ears swinging to each step as though on ball bearings. Occasionally, far ahead, and still considerably above us, we made out, through the forest, the sky-line of the ridge.

By and by Calamity Jane stopped. Mechanically I felt for my slingshot. Then I saw that Old Slob had also stopped, and also Buckshot, and also Coco, from the elevation of whose back Billy was addressing some one. By standing in my stirrups I could just make out a small boy on a sand bar in the middle of the stream. He was a very small boy indeed, and he wore an old pair of his big brother's overalls, cut off below and pulled up above until all I saw was blue denim and a straw hat, with just a hint of yellow curls and a single brown bare foot. The other brown bare foot was dug bashfully into the sand. An

enormous fishing rod completed the outfit.

Billy was attempting conversation.

"Hello!" said she.

"How do, ma'am," very low, almost inaudible.

"Caught any fish?"

"No, ma'am"—the other foot began to dig out of sight.

"What's your name?"

"Johnny, ma'am."

"Johnny what?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"How far is it to Big Meadow?" I asked.

He looked up. The effect was very good, for he proved to be an honestly homely infant with a wide engaging mouth and gray eyes.

"Jest over the ridge, ma'am—sir."

"Well, good luck," we wished him, and rode on.

"Woof, woof!" remarked Pepper. That did not mean that she was angry at the small boy or meant him bodily harm. It was only her way of announcing that she was an Airedale and exclusive. Then she leaped in the air twice, turning completely around each time, bit her tail with an appearance of fulfilling an important obligation, and trotted after us with the virtuous air of having done her full duty.

We topped the ridge and so came to Big Meadow.

Big Meadow lies in a shallow cup. It is exactly like a lake, only the waters are the green grass, arms of which reach among and around wooded knolls like bays and estuaries. A forest surrounds it, and hills surround the forest, and mountain peaks the hills. You have to travel some miles to appreciate the latter fact, however. During those miles you ride in

the woods, with occasional openings for brooks and thickets and other wilderness necessities of the kind, until all at once you look out over California, lying seven thousand feet below. Or if you happen to go in the other direction you merely bob up and down little ridges until the trail emerges from cover, at which point it stands on edge and you climb up to snow banks. But at Big Meadow itself there is little to convince you of elevation unless, happening to botanize or to carry a heavy pail of water, you shall find your wind short.

Prevented from crossing the meadow by a wire fence, we rode on for some distance through the woods. Then we came upon a number of young men building apparently a stockade.

They were tall, straight, sturdy young men, with tanned, solemn faces and preternaturally grave eyes. They had dug

The mountain meadows are like small lakes, with grass in lieu of water.

a circular trench some three feet deep, and were now engaged in placing therein as many large logs as would stand upright side by side. They had a horse and an axe and a cross-cut saw; that was about all. The rest they did with their hands and most excellent muscles. It seemed rather a titanic undertaking this; and in view of their statement that the structure was to be a corral, perhaps excessive. A kangaroo would have difficulty in negotiating a much lower barrier, and a locomotive could hardly have plunged through. However, they were certainly having fun doing it; and performed the necessary feats of strength with a happy superabundance of energy that possibly was in itself an explanation of the stockade. No mere corral could adequately have exercised these lusty young mountaineers.

They directed us a few hundred feet

farther to the main camp, where we found the Ranger and his wife, a cordial welcome, a little tent for our fatigue, a hearty supper for our hunger, and a cabin with a big roaring fireplace across all one end for the evening.

THE FOREST RANGER

II

THE FOREST RANGER

Big Meadow flourished under a benign and patriarchal government. The Forest Ranger was the head of it. His many big sons hearkened to his counsels and obeyed his commands implicitly and cheerfully; the women looked to him as the women in the tents of Shem looked to their masters; and the very beasts seemed to repose trust in him as the beneficent arbiter of their destinies. So much giving, so much ordering of affairs had bred in him a certain deliberate largeness of spirit. He never had to assert his authority, because by habit it had long since become assured. His control seemed almost Indian in its scope; and

yet it was in no sense an oppressive control. The kindly breadth of his spirit seemed to find its exact counterpart in his appearance, for he was deep-chested, thick-shouldered, sturdy of limb; and his massive, handsome face, with twinkling eyes, was well set off by his close-cropped grizzled hair.

We talked together a good deal in the course of the next few days. He turned out to be an enthusiast on the subject of his calling. The salary of a forest ranger is small, but he habitually spent part of it for supplies and tools denied him by the Government. He failed to understand the niggardly policy, but proved no bitterness.

"They told me to send in a list of fire-fighting tools in my district," he said, with a jolly chuckle. "My district then was from Kings River to the Kaweah. At that time all the fire-fighting tools within

sixty miles was four rakes that I made myself out of fifty cents' worth of nails."

He was hopeful, however, and saw a future.

"I like the mountains," he told me, "and I like my district, and I have the best trail crew in the reserves. Some day the Government will wake up, and then all the boys who are doing good work and keeping at it will get their chance. Why, my oldest boy was making good wages in the mill, but I told him he'd better quit and come in with me. The wages might not be so good; but a mill man is only a mill man, and a forest ranger is, or will be, in the line of promotion. And then, too, he's out of doors—and *responsible.*"

He had followed his own advice; for he was a man of some property and known ability, and had gone out of business and politics to take this subordinate position.

"I'm a dyed-in-the-wool Democrat," said he, with another of his delightful chuckles, "and it's mighty handy, for when my friends tackle me for especial favors I just tell them I have a hard enough time holding my own job."

Naturally a man of his fiber made enemies. He was, perhaps, a little too arbitrary sometimes; and it was hard, very hard, for him to acknowledge himself in the wrong. A powerful influence for his removal was last summer brought to bear by certain people whom his rigid enforcement of game and forest regulations had offended, and by some others in whose case, it must be confessed, he had made mistakes. Luckily, an inspector who knew a man held up his hands for him, otherwise the service would have lost a valuable servant. Men who work for the love of it are too scarce to lose.

The Ranger had, moreover, a most in-

teresting and sound outlook on life. He had lived much among men in his commercial and political career, and he had from his earliest youth lived much also in the vast solitudes of the mountains. The material he gathered in the lowland he digested and ruminated in the highlands. The result was a common-sense philosophy which he expressed with much sententiousness.

In a grove near the camp was an out-of-door smithy and wood-working shop. There every conceivable job of repair and manufacture was undertaken. While I was watching the Ranger blueing a rifle sight, one of the younger boys brought up a horse and began rather bunglingly to shoe the animal. I watched the operation for awhile in silence.

"The boy is a little inexperienced," I ventured to suggest after a time. "Aren't you afraid he'll lame the horse?"

The Ranger glanced up.

"Every one of the boys has to do his own shoeing and repairing of all kinds," said he. "He's been shown how, and he'll just have to learn. I made up my mind some time ago that I would rather have a horse weak in his hoof than a boy weak in his intellect."

From that we came to talking of boys, and education, and chances in life.

"I have eight boys of all ages," said he, "and I have given a lot of thought to them. They are getting the best education I can buy for them—a man does not get far without it. And then, besides, I am teaching them to be thorough, and to do things with their hands as well as with their heads. I want them to be like the old fellow who built his stone wall four foot high and five foot wide. Somebody asked him what he did it for. 'Well,' said he, 'there's a heap of wind in this country,

and I wanted her so that if she should blow over she'd be a foot higher after the trouble than she was before.' "

He laughed with genuine enjoyment of his own story, and plunged the sight into the forge fire.

"Turn 'em loose, that's the way to do it. Teach them to take care of themselves, and then they will. Why, the youngster is all over the hills, and he is only six year old."

I said that the day before we had seen him over the divide.

"Yes, and some day when he gets left over a divide somewhere by accident, he'll get back all right; and when he grows up he will be more fond of divides than of pool rooms and saloons. My wife used to worry over my letting the boys go hunting when they were so young. One day especial she came to me in a regular panic. 'Look here, Sam,' she said, 'here's

a piece in the paper that says little Jack Hooper has shot himself in the leg, and it will have to be cut off. Suppose that should happen to one of our boys?' 'Well,' I told her, 'I would rather have a boy on one sober leg than two drunken ones,' and that is about right, I do believe."

He had the old frontiersman's belief in the axe and the rifle. At any time of day could be heard the report of firearms. "Somebody's sighting his rifle," was always the explanation. The expenditure of ammunition—expensive, high-power ammunition—was something enormous, but was considered a good investment.

"Yes, Jim is a tolerable reliable shot," agreed the Ranger; and that really meant that Jim was sure death. "Johnny has a kind of notion he can stick to leather," meant that Johnny could ride out the wildest bucker. They knew and had

named every deer for miles around. At the time we visited Big Meadow they were discussing "Old Three Toes," who had for years eluded them. Subsequently the Ranger wrote me that Three Toes had been killed, and had proved to be of eight points. Certainly these smooth-moving quiet giants and supple boys could all pass examinations in the Arabic education of a man—to ride, shoot, and speak the truth.

The Ranger was just in for a few days. He had, of course, ridden the mountains far, so we had great fun discussing trails and ways through, and the places where we had both been, and where he had been and I had not. In that manner we became interested in the Roaring River, a stream that had heretofore impressed us merely as waterfalls and cascades dropping some thousands of feet into the Kings River cañon. Now it seemed that there existed

upper reaches among the granites and snows. He told me quite simply of the meadows and streams in the two long cañons. Somehow the names fascinated me—Roaring River, forking into Cloudy and Deadman's Cañons, beneath Table and Milestone Mountains of the Great Western Divide. It is a region practically unvisited.

"There ought to be bear up there," said the Ranger, "and I know there's deer."

He drew a rough map, showing some landmarks as he remembered them from a visit made ten years before.

"If it wasn't for Billy," thought I, "we'd try it."

But Billy arose to her full five feet and demanded to know what that had to do with it. When Billy demands things from her extreme height it is politic to diplomatize. So the subject dropped.

We led luxurious lives. I joined the

littlest children perched on stockade logs already in place, or rode with the Ranger near camp. Billy talked learnedly about "starters" or "sponges" with the women, or reveled in starch. Starch she had forgotten the delights of, so she stiffened everything in sight until material gave out. Then she cast a speculative eye on Pepper and her bristling terrier coat, but thought better of it.

And Pepper and Tuxana enjoyed themselves also. A trough of milk was always kept full for the various dogs about the place. After a breakfast from it, they would dig happily for ground squirrels and woodchucks. They never caught any, but accomplished some noble excavations. All that could be seen of any one of them was a quivering tail and a shower of earth. Then suddenly a hinder end would appear, wriggling backward; a mud-whiskered, snap-eyed

happy countenance would pop out, look about for an instant vacantly, and whisk back again in a panic, lest an instant had been wasted. At night they straggled in tired, dirty, disgraceful, with open, vacuous smiles decorated by three inches of hanging tongue, to flop down flat on the cabin floor. There they snoozed all the evening, their hind legs occasionally twitching as they raced through dreams of easily caught woodchucks.

The evenings were cold, so we assembled then about the big fireplace in the main cabin. We made quite a gathering, and the talk was of many things. Two other forest rangers dropped in, both fine fellows.

The average citizen thinks of the forest ranger as a man whose main duty is to ride here and there through the reserve, picnicking at night, and generally enjoying life. This is not so. The ranger,

in addition to his fire patrol and fire fighting, has to keep trails in order, improve old trails, mark out and build new ones. Even with the best of tools this is no mean feat of engineering in a high mountain country; but until recently the Government has afforded its servants mighty little help in that direction. Last summer (1904) was made an appropriation of fifty dollars for powder, the first ever issued, in a granite country! In addition to his trail work, the ranger has to regulate the grazing, where the cattle men are all at war with one another and with authority; to see that sheep are excluded; to oversee campers and settlers; and to protect the game. If he happens to have any spare time he tries to build himself shelters here and there through his district, generally at his own expense.

All his accounts are audited at Washington, by men who know nothing of

local conditions. Many of his claims are apt to be disallowed, and must then come out of his own pocket. For instance, one man early in the season, pursuing sheep trespassers into the high country where the grass was still frozen, put in a claim for two or three sacks of horse feed. Claim disallowed on the ground that he should depend on natural feed. He has to fight red tape at Washington, natural difficulties in the field, powerful interests on whose toes he must tread in order to fulfill his duty as ranger, and in some cases gross neglect on the part of time-serving or incompetent superiors.

"What sort of a bird is a supervisor, anyway?" one asked me once. "I never even saw the tail feathers of one."

As a final and additional discouragement the ranger is apt to be laid off part of the year on grounds of economy, so that he is forced either to seek

A short forage—a sharp report—and dinner.

temporary work—always hard to find—or to lie idle.

In spite of these difficulties, or perhaps by the very fact that they discourage all but the enthusiasts, the rank and file of the forest service is especially good. While we were at Big Meadow news came of a thousand dollar trail appropriation—the first substantial appropriation of the sort. The rangers rejoiced as heartily as though each had been left the money as a personal legacy. I know many who spend a large part of their wages in the improvement of their districts, and each and every one lives in the high hope that some day the service will get its desert of attention and compensation. With a strong and able leader these men would go far. They, with their endless discussions of new routes and possible trails and discovered "ways through," are the true pioneers of a vast and rich country.

At the end of three days Wes had not yet appeared. We decided to move on, leaving word for him to overtake us. The evening before our departure Billy took affairs into her own hands.

"Now see here," said she, "why can't we go into the Roaring River country?"

"Because I don't know anything about it," said I.

"What's that to do with it?"

"Well," I pointed out, "unless you know a country, you never are sure of where you are going to camp or of how long your day is going to be. It's too uncertain, and it's likely to be hard work."

"It won't be hard work for me," she argued. "No matter how rough the travel is all I have to do is to sit on Coco while you work; and as for standing a long day, how long were we the time we couldn't ford the Kings?"

"Well, not very long."

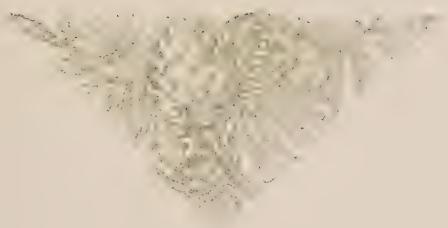
"Stop and think. We broke camp at half past seven; and then we went to Millwood, and didn't stop for lunch, and got to the river at five. Then how long were we trying to ford?"

"Not long," said I, weakly.

"It was until black dark; and this is midsummer. There!"

We argued at length. Finally we compromised. We were to go up in the Roaring River country just as far as it was comfortable and easy. If hardships began we were to turn back. With this Billy was satisfied. I think she knew that we would never turn back once we had tasted the adventure of a first repulse.

ROARING RIVER



III

ROARING RIVER

So we received a bag of venison jerky as a parting gift and set out for the Rowell Meadow Trail. Wes was to follow. By dusk we had gained a long strip of green grass running up a shallow ravine to the darkness of the woods, a wide, fair lawn sloping to a flowing brook, and four great yellow pines, one of them prostrate. To the broken limbs of the latter we tethered our animals while we unpacked. Each horse, when freed, walked immediately to a patch of deep dust each must already have remarked, took a satisfying roll, shook vigorously, and fell to eating in the strip of green grass. Tuxana lay down. Pepper, warm blooded and thick coated, stood belly deep in the

stream, an expression of imbecile satisfaction on her countenance. Billy began to scrape together a wagon load or so of the dry pine needles for a bed, while I took the camp shovel and dug out a fireplace on the edge of the brook. At this point the turf sloped down and over the very stream, so I could turn directly from my fire to dip up water, which was unusual and comforting. In ten minutes supper was under way. The dry pine twigs crackled and spluttered, throwing a vibration of smokeless heat straight up. The three kettles set up a bubbling.

Over the stream and up the incline of the mountain an oliveback was singing his deliberate, clear, liquidly beautiful vespers. From the thin screen of asps around the meadow sloping above us came the rambling warble of the purple finch. A rock wren raved near; and a water ouzel dipped and swung close to

the current of the stream. Great austere shadows lay athwart our lawn; the winds of a mighty space beyond the pines breathed softly across the air warmed by the sun that had left us. Evening, always big and fearsome in the mountains, hovered imminent, ready to swoop in its swift California fashion.

Suddenly Pepper, who had long since emerged from the stream, raised her head.

"Woof, woof!" she grumbled under her breath.

Once we used to pay attention when Pepper said "Woof, woof!" but that time was gone by. Pepper is an actress. When she can gain no attention by cocking her head to one side, raising one ear, cavorting nimbly in mid-air, or madly biting a much-abused tail, she looks fixedly into space and growls in mighty threat and great ferocity. One who did not know Pepper would imagine that by means of

preternaturally keen senses she had discovered a lurking danger of which she warned us and from which she was prepared to defend us. But we knew Pepper, so we paid no attention. In a moment, however, Tuxana also showed symptoms. We got to our feet. Far down the slope, in the direction from which we had come, we thought to catch a gleam of white among the pines. Presently we saw another. Then sounded a faint, shrill whistle. Both dogs bounded away. In a few minutes we were lifting heavy packs of supplies from the morose Dinkey and the faithful Jenny, while Wes, a broad grin on his face, made a dive for the kettles.

That meant mail, the first for two months. We built a big fire by which to read. The magazines were put away in "the library"—a flour sack—while we devoured our letters.

The library was a wonderful affair. Besides the magazines, it contained a variety surely. At first when off on a long trip you do not pay much attention to reading matter, but after a time you save everything you can lay your hand on. We possessed about twenty dime novels—property of Wes—having to do with the adventures of Nick Carter, the Sleuth, and with marvelous deeds of a youth of sixteen, known as Dick Merriwell. Both heroes were copper-riveted, and throughout the most bewildering catastrophes we preserved a comfortable confidence that they would come out all right. Then there were two books in Spanish, one volume of obscure but interesting slavers' adventures, two remarkably cheap novels of the English nobility, one of Stevenson's, two saddle catalogues, and a bushel of old newspapers.

The next morning we made an early

start, and by ten o'clock were looking across a wide sweep of pine country to the long crest of the Great Western Divide. Between us and it intervened low, rolling mountains covered with timber. To the left, many miles, and beyond a ridge cleft to admit the passage of Roaring River, we divined the tremendous plunge of the Kings River Cañon. To the right, again many miles, we discerned the sheer, bald granite peaks, worn smooth by glacial action, capped and streaked by snow, over which our way must lead were we to gain the cañon of the Kaweah. In the meantime, our first task must be to cross the wide pine country below us until we had gained the cañon down which plunged the Roaring River. There we were promised an old mine trail leading up to the last sharp ascent.

To our surprise we found the way easy, though a little bewildering. The pines

were full of streams, and the streams had here and there formed meadows rich with feed, and on the feed grazed small, wild bands of the mountain cattle. They had tracked the country in all directions, and as the mine trail had never been blazed or monumented, it became increasingly difficult to follow. Not that it mattered much. We knew our direction; and, indeed, we soon cut loose from convention and struck off directly cross country. Sooner or later, provided we kept to the straight line, we were bound to come to Roaring River.

The country was delightful. We could not understand why it was so little known. The meadows lay fair and green, surrounded by dense thickets of cottonwoods or quaking asps, and islanded with round bushes. The woods were thick and tall. The travel under foot was not rough, as roughness goes in the high mountains.

Of course, we were not able entirely to keep to the straight line. The thickets forced us to detour; the streams flowed sometimes in miniature unscalable cañons. Often the pines gave place to bold outcrops, which must be avoided, or wide patches of manzanita or snow-bush, through which it was impossible to force our way. The shoulder of Mt. Brewer, however, was our guiding mark, and we steadily neared its shadow.

Lunch of hard tack and raisins we ate in the saddle. We saw many game tracks, bear and deer. Once, while skirting an aspen thicket and buck-jumping through a windfall, we jumped a deer within a few feet of the leading horse. Evidently he had intended lying hidden in the hope of escaping observation, but we had headed too directly toward him. He turned sharp to the right, and encircled our entire outfit, leaping high in the stiff-

legged bounds of the blacktail, until at last, like a phantom, he entered the closing-in point of the trees and was gone.

About three in the afternoon we came out over Roaring River. It was well named. The waters dashed white and turbulent far below us, filling the forest with their voice. We turned sharp to the right, and after some scrambling and uncertainty among ledges and boulders gained the floor of the valley. Here we rode for some time until we caught sight of green on the opposite bank, made a precarious ford through swift water and over uncertain boulders, and at last threw off the packs on a knoll of pine needles rising but slightly above the thick grasses. We had been ten hours in the saddle.

DEADMAN'S CAÑON

IV

DEADMAN'S CAÑON

A WINDING path led through a fringe of bushes down to the stream. There a back eddy behind a rock offered a peaceful dip to our kettles. Elsewhere the water leaped and boiled from one pool to another, without pause for breath, as though exultant. Immediately about the knoll on which we had spread our tarpaulins the grass, sown with flowers, grew tall. Over opposite, beyond the trees, a high ridge rose imminent. To the left and up the cañon a rounded bluff marked the forking of the stream. We were snugly backed by a pine slope, efficient screen to the lofty mountains but just be-

yond. A great crying of waters filled the hollow of our cañon. At first it drew our attention almost too painfully, then dropped into accustomedness, and below its roaring we made out the elfin voices of the rapids which I have elsewhere described.*

It was quite dark by the time we had cooked ourselves something to eat. Wes explored a little in the dusk, and reported another meadow above, and a cache of provisions in a small tent, evidently the property of the man who had brought the cattle into the country that spring and would take them out again in the fall. I whipped a few eddies—there were no pools—and caught three or four trout. We turned in well satisfied with our lot in life.

The next morning we decided, in spite of stout protests on the part of that young

* See "The Forest," p. 54.

Deadman's Cañon.

woman, that Billy's ten hours' ride of the day before had been enough for her. She was to keep camp, while Wes and I explored the possibilities of the right-hand cañon. So she strapped on "Black Mike," a six-shooter, diminutive, but with the marvelous property of making her feel perfectly safe against anything up to and including earthquakes. Thus fortified she bade us farewell, and we splashed across the swift waters of the river.

The cañon proved to be seven or eight miles long. It progressed upward by a series of terraces. We would ride through a fringe of woods, or over a meadow, and then climb vigorously to right or left of a slide or broken fall until we had gained another level. The cañon walls were very high, very sheer, and of nearly unbroken stone. The glacial action had brought them to syncline near the bottom, so that to all intents and purposes we were trav-

eling a smooth half-cylinder of granite in whose trough a certain amount of fertile earth had accumulated. The scenery thus was inexpressibly bleak and grand.

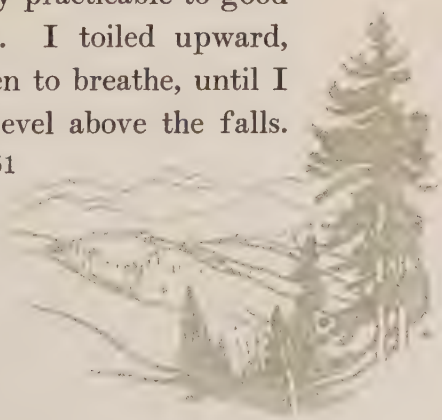
After perhaps two hours we came in sight of the end of the cañon. There the stream fell sheer in a fall of indeterminate height. The cañon walls widened around to the grand sweep of a cirque, and we were able to view for the first time the mountain barrier over which we must win.

Although we were still some miles from the beginning of the ascent, we unsaddled and picketed our horses. The rest of the reconnaissance would be easier afoot. While munching our hardtack and jerky we examined minutely through our glasses the face of the mountain range. To the left of the fall it seemed green, and beyond that were ledges and niches and possibilities up to the snow that filled the

saddle. We followed painstakingly every step of the way. It might be done.

Finally I announced my intention of taking a look at the fall. Wes said he would climb up a break in the right-hand wall. We separated, having agreed on six-shooter signals—two shots, come; three shots, come quick.

I found the distance to the falls much greater than I had anticipated. The air was very clear at this elevation, and I walked for three-quarters of an hour before I reached the patch of snow at the foot of the steep grade. There, to my delight, I discovered an old miner's trail leading leftward of the falls through the greenery, which turned out to be tall brush. The way was steep and much washed, but perfectly practicable to good horses such as ours. I toiled upward, stopping pretty often to breathe, until I stood on the small level above the falls.



Thence, the trail still leading in my direction, I continued to climb, zig-zagging from one advantage to another, rather shortwinded, for I was in a hurry, but steadily gaining toward the dazzling upper peaks.

My first intention had been to explore merely this far, but as the afternoon was still new I made up my mind to follow the trail to the end. The calendar said August, but up here it was still early spring. The ground was soggy with water, and from every direction leaped waterfalls and cascades. Of course, I was now far above timber line, but the short-hair grass had gained foothold in some fortuitous little levels. As I topped one of these, I came upon two golden eagles standing on the rocks not twenty feet from my face. They did not seem greatly alarmed, but rose slowly with a flapping of mighty wings. Shortly after, I arrived at the

end of the miner's trail. All that remained of the camp was a leveled spot on the shale, some timbers, a rusty pick, and the usual cans and bottles. Some brilliant specimens of copper ore showed what had been the object of the prospecting. The men must have had to pack every stick of firewood up from the cañon below.

I did not pause here, for the afternoon was spending, and it was a long ride back to our Roaring River camp. The trail ended, so I climbed on more circumspectly, trying to monument a way through for horses. This is a trick requiring some practice, for you must know, in the first place, just what a horse can or cannot do in an unbroken country; and in the second place, you must understand enough of formations to know whether or not you are leading yourself to a blind pocket of a pinched-out ledge. The way I found was rough, but passable,

and by another half hour I had reached the edge of the snow.

For the first time I looked back. Deadman's Cañon extended from directly below me. The strip of earth down its trough, which had seemed so ample to us while we were traveling through it, now had narrowed to a mere streak of green. The glacial sweep of the half cylinder from cliff to cliff appeared almost unbroken. I could make out Roaring River Cañon and the place where Kings River Cañon should lie, but even beyond that, rising from the lowest depths, tier after tier, were mountains and ranges innumerable. The day was remarkably clear, and I could see without effort the snow-clad peaks back of Yosemite, and that, as the crow flies, was one hundred and thirty-five miles. I made out also mountains we had lived with, and lost sight of, weeks before. It forced home a feeling of the discrep-

ancy between what a man can conceive and what he can do. Here I could leap at one eyesight to the valley of the Tuolumne, yet it would take me about three toilsome weeks to make the notion good.

Peaks of every sort were all about me as on a spacious relief map. The immediate surroundings, except back of me in the case of the mountain I was climbing, and to the east of me, where intervened the Great Western Divide, were fortunately lower than myself, so I could see to the natural horizon. The general effect to the distant north and west was of an undulating pine-green carpet, from which sprang boldly here and there groups of white or granite peaks. At the middle distance, however, the mantle broke into a tumult of stone and snow.

I here left the picking of a horse route, and climbed straight up the snow. From

this point the problem was easy, and the detailed selection of a trail would bear postponement. In twenty minutes' hard scrabbling I had gained the saddle, and looked over into the valley of the Kaweah.

I suppose this point represents the wildest and most rugged of the Sierras. The Great Western Divide, above fourteen thousand feet, runs down from the northwest. It is crossed at one angle by a tremendous and splintered upheaval called the Kaweah Group, and at another by the lesser but still formidable ridge on which I stood.

Three cañons headed almost at my feet: Deadman's Cañon, up which we had that day ridden; Cloudy Cañon, which turned sharp back toward its neighbor, to come to rest beneath the same peak; and the mighty cañon of the Kaweah, a second Yosemite, with its polished granite

aprons, its awful plunges, and the bleak ruggedness of its snows and spires.

I looked down then from the saddle to the headwaters of the Kaweah River with some curiosity. To my left was a great cirque, a semi-circle of sheer mountains of nothing but granite and snow. In the cup was a torment of splintered granite débris unrelieved by a single spear of any green thing; and two lakes, one slightly higher than the other. The upper of these two lakes was frozen solid; but from the lower, in which floated white ice, a stream crept to the edge of the cirque.

There it plunged several hundred feet to a second level, again circular in shape. This contained another lake, and a green meadow, through which filtered innumerable snaky streamlets, but no trees. Again the plunge to still a third level; and at the very lower end of this, beyond the usual lake, were two or three tamarack trees.

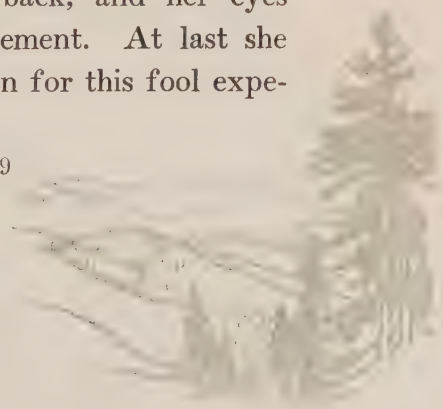
Then the cañon floor disappeared in the middle of the earth.

And over opposite, contemporaneous with my own elevation, were the giants of the Kaweah group, black, scarred by storms, wreathed with snow clinging in streaks to their polished steep sides.

I climbed part way down the southern slope of the saddle in which I stood. The way was over shale for a few hundred feet, then narrowed to a steep rock "chimney," like a funnel-mouth pointing to the abysses below. Nothing could pass that way. I retraced my steps to the saddle and climbed to the top of the peak to eastward, whence I could look down into Cloudy Cañon and over to the Great Western Divide. Between Cloudy Cañon and the headwaters of the Kaweah lay another saddle, lower than the one I had just climbed. Moreover, just beyond it was a red mountain. Now the Ranger

had given us a red mountain as a landmark for our possible pass. Therefore, I concluded that the lower saddle would be our best "way through," and that we should bring our pack train up Cloudy rather than Deadman's Cañon.

By now it was four o'clock. I returned to the saddle, spread my arms out, dug my heels in, and fairly sailed down the steep slope of snow. It did not matter much whether or not I fell—I merely rolled a greater or lesser distance. Behind me a cloud of snow rose thick as dust on a country road. It was glorious. Tuxana, who had followed me patiently, woke into wild excitement. She raced around and around, her hind legs tucked well under her, her forelegs bent down in front, her ears back, and her eyes snapping with excitement. At last she understood the reason for this fool expedition.



We were soon out of the snow, but even in soggy and rocky trails going down is quicker than going up—at ten thousand feet. We gained the bottom in three-quarters of an hour. There I fired my six-shooter and sat down on a rock, for I was pretty tired. In a little while Wes rode up, leading Bullet.

He reported an interesting view and a fine glacier lake, but nothing of practical importance. We rode home through the early twilight of deep cañons, the domes and battlements above us looming huger and more portentous as the light failed. About seven o'clock we regained camp. Billy had caught some fish and cooked some supper.

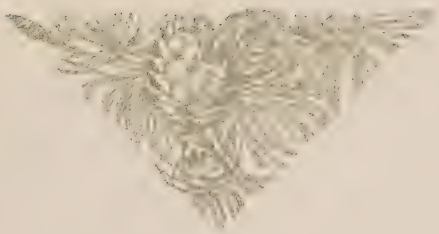
"To-morrow," said we, "we will go up to the head of Cloudy Cañon; next day we will work over the pass, and so on down."

The Ranger had told us that once we

Wes clears the trail.

had gained the saddle the rest was easy; and I had seen enough to convince me that a little hard work would get us to the top. Four days later we recamped at this very spot after our first repulse.

CLOUDY CAÑON



V

CLOUDY CAÑON

CLOUDY CAÑON we found to differ from Deadman's Cañon only in the fact that at its lower end it was more overgrown with aspen thickets, and at the upper end the jumps by terraces were rougher. The glacial polishings were seen to great advantage here, in some places so glossy, even on granite, as to shine in the sun like mirrors. Some of the meadows we had to cross proved boggy, some of the ascents full of broken and jagged débris. Still the travel was good enough, and by four or five o'clock we had gained the last cirque before the ascent to the saddle I had the day before seen from above.

We camped on a flat just over the

stream. The nearest wood was at some distance. By means of our riatas we dragged enough for a blaze. Patches of snow lay all about us. A cold wind sucked down from above, and as the gray of evening descended the immediate surroundings took on a black and desolate aspect. Even the water of the stream looked cold and steel color, as though it had but just melted from the ice, as, indeed, was the case.

The mountain above, however, was heavily stained with iron, and the red of this, catching the last rays of the sun after the other ranges had become slate-gray, caused it to glow as with some interior fire of incandescence. We watched it as we would watch a wood fire in a grate—this great mass of stone and snow—reddening and paling, burning with a fiercer, hotter combustion or cooling as it died. At last the evening shadow quenched it.

In the meantime we had been exploring with our glasses. It was entirely out of the question to go straight up the cañon. That was banked solid with snow perhaps fifty or sixty feet deep. The ascent to the right hand of the cañon looked easy enough for some distance, but on that side at the base of the pass again intervened a sheet of snow. To the left all seemed clear, with the exception of a "nigger head," three-quarters of the way up. It might, however, be possible to get over this. Only actual reconnaissance could determine that point.

By this time it had grown to be distinctly cold. We had a good fire, and our sweaters, but even they could not entirely keep out the penetrating snow chill. So, as always in such cases, we decided on exercise and got out Tuxana's gunny-sack.

Tuxana, as I have explained, is a bull

terrier. She is built of whalebone springs. If you do not believe this, you should see her hunting through a high grass. Then you would observe her bounding three or four feet straight up in the air in order to get sight over the tops.

Now Tuxana's character is simple, earnest and single-minded. What she undertakes she does with all her might, and nothing can distract her attention from it. And the things she delights in are three: The first is hunting, the second is swinging from a gunny sack, the third is swimming after a stick. I have mentioned these in the order of their importance. In all other matters Tuxana is staid and unexcited and of a reasonable disposition. But let a squirrel chirp, a bag move, or a stick appear, and Tuxana's mental equilibrium totters. Life focusses.

So I stood up and held the sack above

my head. Tuxana's eyes snapped. She leaped straight into the air higher than my shoulder, and her teeth came together viciously.

"How'd you like to get your hand in there?" asked Wes.

At the third jump she managed to seize the bag. Her jaws clamped. Her eyes closed luxuriously for a moment. Thenceforward nothing could shake her loose. I swung her around my head; I pulled her along the ground. Always, her eyes half shut in pleasure, but snapping with beady lights beneath her lids, she resisted. Finally I paused. At once Tuxana assumed the aggressive. Half squatting she began to pull by little jerks. It was astonishing what power she developed. I was four times her weight, and yet I could hardly hold her. Finally I threw her the sack. Immediately Pepper, who had been awaiting the chance, sprang for-

ward to grab the other end. Growling fiercely the two dogs wrestled for possession. In the end, however, Tuxana conquered by virtue of her superior age and weight—Pepper was at that time only nine months old—and sat proudly on the sack, daring any one to take it from her.

We moved aside the smallest and most prominent stones, laid out our saddle blankets next the ground, spread the big canvas taupaulin over them, added a wadded comforter or "sogun" as additional softening, and finished the bed with our gray army blanket. The other end of the canvas then folded over the whole. Wes took the lantern and hunted himself a place to do likewise.

It was very cold. We put on two suits of underwear and our sweaters and moccasins. Then we turned in. Tuxana looked wistful, so we held up a corner,

and she crawled down to our feet. How she breathed I cannot tell you, but she seemed perfectly happy. Pepper we covered up carefully—we always did. In about ten seconds she got panicky because her head was covered, instituted a general upheaval of blankets, and got kicked out into the cold. This was the usual programme.

Our noses turned cold, the stars over us seemed fairly to crackle in the heavens, the still silver mountains sparkled in the rare air. We could hear the swift dash of the snow-water in the creek below, the faint sound of the horse bell in the short-hair meadow. The wind lifted and let fall a corner of the tarpaulin. We were glad of woolen things and wind-turning covers and snug quarters. The remains of the fire glowed and sputtered faintly. To the south I could see in silhouette the dip of the saddle. It rose gloomy and

forbidding, mysterious in its own blackness.

"Oh, but it's going to be some chillsome at four in the morning!" said I to Billy.

So we went to sleep.

BLOODY PASS

VI

BLOODY PASS

FOUR o'clock in the morning proved indeed to be mighty cold. The sun was just gilding some peaks a long distance above us, but that did not do us any good. All the horses had moved over to the westward slope of the mountain, where they would be certain to catch the very first rays of warmth. Their hair stuck up dark and velvety.

A hot cup of coffee went to the spot. Then we caught up the horses, and if there is anything more finger-numbing and distressing than to undo heavy leather hobbles stiff with frost, then I do not know what it is. We brought them in to camp.

I left Wes to pack up, and pushed on in light marching order up the right hand

of the cañon. Our way probably led to the left and over the "nigger-head," but it was thought best to overlook no bets. We agreed on a conventional six-shooter signal.

It took me probably an hour to reach the snow line. I could make out a dim miner's trail as far as that, but of course it was lost beyond. A very steep climb over frozen snow-fields—utterly impossible for horses—brought me to the ridge, and once again I looked into the cañon of the Kaweah. The ridge ran up to a very knife edge of rock, some of it solid, some cut by the frost into blocks and some loose and wobbly, but none over eighteen inches wide. It fell away on either side for twenty or thirty feet. After two minutes I was glad to descend again to the snow.

With many precautions against slipping I skirted the base of the cliffs until

We had just time to dig our heels in and brace for the shock when over she went.

I had reached the saddle. There I walked out into plain sight on the snow and fired my six-shooter twice, by way of a signal to take the left hand, as the only possible route. Watching carefully through my glasses I made out Wes and Billy rounding the pack stock together. Satisfied that they understood, I now turned my attention to the problem of surmounting the nigger-head.

A very cursory examination proved to me that it would be impossible to pass above it. The upper side fell off sheer. Below it ran a narrow strip of rock and shale, steep as a roof, and dropping off straight into the main cañon.

The slant as it stood was too abrupt for footing. A horse would simply creep around below the precipice of the nigger-head until he came to the narrow steep roof. Then his weight would start an avalanche in the shale which would carry

him off the edge to an untimely death. So I began to experiment, and soon discovered that by sitting down and kicking vigorously I could gouge out a little furrow which would hold. It was tough on the shoes, and rather hard work; but I sat there and kicked cheerfully until I had accomplished a nick from the head of the cañon to the base of the nigger-head. It was rather an invisible sort of nick, and it ran only about twenty feet above the precipice, and it was very crumbly at best, but I looked upon it with pride and satisfaction.

There remained only about forty feet to do. That ran through cliff-débris from the nigger-head. I went over it once to find the easiest route, then set myself vigorously to rolling boulders aside, and to chinking the worst holes. This was rather good fun. The big stones went bounding and jumping away like living things,

striking fire at every contact, finally leaping from view over the last precipice, only to reappear after an interval minimized by distance, still rolling and bouncing until at last the repeated shocks broke them to pieces a thousand feet below. The smell of burning was in the air from the superheated stones. Gradually foot by foot I worked forward until at last, when Wes appeared around the corner riding Modesto, there remained not over ten feet to do.

He dismounted and together we went at the remainder. Then we walked back and forth over the length of the trail testing for weak spaces, after which we rode across in sixty seconds, quite safely, but with many doubts. Our horses were the veterans of several hard mountain trips, and they stepped lightly and surely. So we gained the snowline.

At this point the stream, somewhere be-

neath a cañon full of snow, headed in a small circular cup, whose sides sloped steeply to a glacier lake. The water of this lake was of a deep rich peacock-blue, typical of the glaciers, but quite impossible to describe. It was fringed by white ice, which ran out below the surface in ledges of the most perfect robin's-egg blue imaginable. The dazzling white, brilliant rich peacock, and paler translucent blue gave the impression of some rare and precious gem.

The shores sloped very steeply, and were covered with snow which terminated only at the base of the sheer ridge above. Directly across the lake, and perhaps two hundred feet up, this ridge broke and splintered. Wes and I climbed up and took a look at it. It ran in sharp needles of rock, knife-edge slabs struck upright, and jumbled ledge matter. Wes picked out a possibility.

"If they get through here, we'll have to take out a license for keeping goats," said Wes.

We piled up small stones to help in some places, and pried out what obstructions we could, but our best was mighty little. I have seen horses travel in rough country, but this little bit was the worst. However, we consoled ourselves with the Ranger's assurance that once to the top our troubles would be over. We started the horses along. First they had to skirt the lake and climb slanting up the steep snow bank. We anticipated no trouble in this, but when about half way up discovered something of which our light weight afoot had not apprised us. The top covering was comparatively loose; but earlier in the year, before the last snowfall, evidently a freezing rain had fallen, so about six inches under the surface lay a hard and slippery crust.

Dinkey, always cocky and self-confident, was the first victim. She slipped, attempted to recover, and went down. Slowly the weight of her pack overcame her balance, forcing her as one wrestler forces another.

"Look out! She's going to roll over!" yelled Wes.

He threw his riata over her head. We had just time to dig our heels in and brace for the shock when over she went.

Now it was about a hundred feet down to the glacier lake, and we both knew that if Dinkey ever plunged into it we should never see her again. So we braced a mighty brace, and heaved a mighty heave. I can't describe the rest in detail. I know I slid ten feet or so on my heels, was upended, enveloped in a choking whirl of snow, felt the rope encircle me and so cast it loose, stopped rolling, cleared my eyes, saw the end of the rope

within a foot of me, grabbed it, and was again yanked through space.

When the sky resumed its natural position I found that the combined efforts of Dinkey, Wes and myself had brought the outfit to a standstill just about one yard from the edge of the peacock-blue water in the glacier lake. We were covered with snow, and we sprawled at the end of what looked to be the track of an avalanche.

"Well, we stayed with it," said Wes.

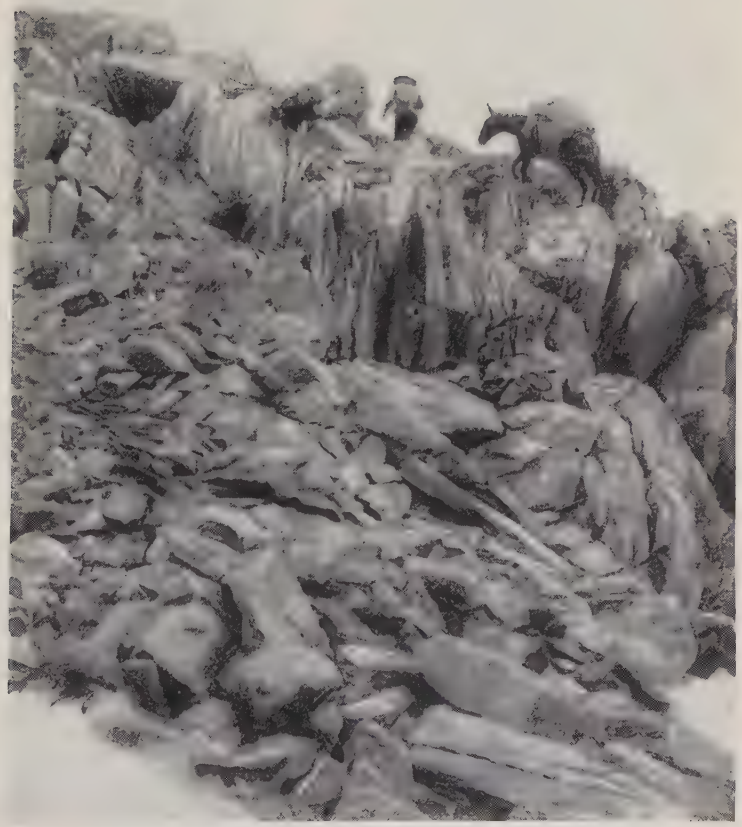
We looked up. Billy was roosting on a rock with a camera in her hand. Bullet, good, wise old Bullet, had headed the rest of the pack train and was holding it there in the deep snow. Tuxana and Pepper, who had added to the joy of the scene by chasing around and around in mad circles, sat on their haunches with a please-do-it-again smile on their faces.

It now became necessary to return Dinkey to her original position. We did

this very gingerly by leading her back to the starting place. She had completely lost her nerve and trembled pathetically. At this Wes and I rejoiced somewhat, for Dinkey heretofore had made us feel very inferior and ignorant.

We now set ourselves in good earnest to the task of gaining the last hundred feet. A rope was attached to Bullet; we both took a hand. But Bullet walked across like a tight-rope dancer. At the piled up destruction of the boulders and ridges he took his time, smelt out each step, and passed without an accident. I rubbed his forehead for him, and left him on a tiny flat place just beyond the top.

Jenny came next. She started confidently enough, following Bullet's lead, but soon had the bad luck to thrust one hind leg through a thin spot and down into a deep hole. In the recovery she fell on her side, and while we managed to



Bullet took his time, smelled out each step, and passed without an accident.

prevent her rolling over, she came so near it that she uttered a sharp squeal of fright. Two years before Jenny had fallen from the trail, had caught on a narrow ledge, and had been slung thence bodily by means of two riatas. The experience had shattered her nerves. Now she went all to pieces. We undid her pack rope, teased the kyak from beneath her—gave her every chance in the world. But she refused even to try to get up. So we twisted her tail and pulled on her lead rope until she had to make some effort. Even then she struggled wildly, her eye fairly glazed with terror. Of course, she went down again, and yet again, floundering like a big fish. We held her to the slope without too great difficulty, for we had good footholds, and little by little teased her along toward the edge of the snow and the beginning of the splintered rocks. There we hoped Jenny would get

over her hysterics in the realization of accustomed footing. The last ten feet she floundered forward on her fore knees, never even attempting to get more fully to her feet.

Once secure we let her stand, while we ourselves carried over her pack to where Bullet patiently awaited us. Then, having decided that Jenny should have regained her poise by this time, we led her on.

How she surmounted that hundred foot climb without breaking her fool neck will always be a problem. She slipped and skated and fell and recovered. The sharp edges cut her fearfully. Blood streaked her from a dozen wounds, ran down her white coat, even dripped on the rocks. We were sorry, but we could not help it. Finally we did gain the saddle, and looking back with deep breaths of relief named this Bloody Pass.

Buckshot made the snow fields with nothing worse than several bad staggers, and the splintered rocks sagely and carefully, testing each foothold, as was Buckshot's fashion. Old Slob, too, did well, though he was badly frightened. At one spot it was necessary to jump from an unstable take-off up a little ledge. Old Slob, too anxious to do the thing properly, rather over-did the matter; his pack over-balanced him, and he poised on the verge of falling directly backward off the mountain. That would have been the end of Old Slob. Fortunately my footing was good, so that by throwing every ounce of my weight into the riata by which I was leading him, I was able to decide the balance.

So we led them up one at a time. The climbing was severe, for the altitude was somewhere about eleven thousand feet. We worked like slaves, and when, after

various minor incidents of the kind already detailed, we had crowded the last of the animals on the big flat rock at the top, we were glad to hunt the lea of a boulder for a rest.

We ate hardtack and venison jerky and raisins, and told each other that the worst now was over. Indeed, as far as we could see, the descent did not seem to be especially difficult. A series of ledges slanting into each other irregularly ran in natural lacets to the limit of eyesight.

After we had eaten we started down. The way was very rough, as you may imagine, but opposed no insuperable obstacles to our animals. It was necessary only that one of us should scout far enough ahead to assure an open way from one broad ledge to another. This was not difficult, for a man afoot can get about much more rapidly than the horses. Occasionally, Wes and Billy would halt un-

til I had explored all the possibilities of a choice of several routes.

In this way we worked down about a thousand feet. The passage in general was plain before us. We had to do a few hundred feet more of this ledge country, then step out on a long shale slide, which, however steep and unstable it might prove to be, would take us safely enough to the shores of the second glacier lake. There we could camp.

I scouted ahead, came to a forty-foot drop, returned, took another way, came to the same forty-foot drop; repeated the operation, gained exactly the same result.

Then both of us men turned in to explore in earnest. A half hour convinced us that we were in a cul-de-sac to which all possible routes from the saddle converged. There was no other way. Our glasses showed us impassable débris below.

We sat down to face the situation. We could not go on; we could not camp here in the granite, where there was no feed, no water, no fuel. The nearest of those necessities was precisely whence we had started this morning.

"We've got to go back," concluded Wes, reluctantly.

It was by now three o'clock. We had been since daylight getting this far. Our horses were tired out from the rough climbing and the lack of food; they had not had a mouthful since they had ceased grazing late the previous night. Before us was a sharp thousand-foot climb, and then the extraordinary difficulties we had surmounted with so much pains and danger. As if to add positively a story-book touch to the discouragement of the outlook, the sky clouded over, and a cold, sleety rain began to fall.

WE FALL BACK

VII

WE FALL BACK

By this time it was three o'clock in the afternoon. We had to traverse before dark the distance we had taken since daylight to cover. As additional full measure, the clouds, which latterly had been gathering about the peaks of the Kaweah Group opposite, now swept across to envelope us. Our horses were tired because of hunger and the hard day. We could anticipate only a bleak, hard camp to which we would have to drag wood at the end of our riatas before we could even get warm.

Pepper and Tuxana alone were aggravatingly cheerful. They sniffed eagerly into all the crevices among the rocks,

popped up bright-eyed over the tops of boulders, quivered with their anxiety to find out what all this expedition was about, anyway. It would have suited us better if they had adapted their demeanor more accurately to the situation. I wish I had a dog's vivid interest in mere living.

Buckshot groaned and grumbled; Dinkey swore, but up the ridge they had to climb again. In the desperation of great weariness is an apparently careless haste that sometimes accomplishes marvels. It carried us over the needles of rock and down the snow slopes without the smallest accident. Rain began to fall, at first like mist, then more heavily in long, pelting lines. Darkness was shutting in.

At this point Billy and the dogs left us. They were to run down the snow lying deep in the cañon. The crust was plenty strong enough to support a human being, with some to spare, but the horses would

probably have broken through. We watched her figure dwindle as she slid and slipped down the long white declivity. Our fate was to pick out in the darkness and rain the miserable and tortuous foothold we had that morning constructed. We speedily became wet through, after which the affair was an entire engrossment in dark, slippery rocks, the trickle of waters, voids filled with gray, and constant shoutings of advice, speculation and encouragement from one to the other of us. The horses traveled doggedly, as tired horses will, their heads swinging.

Finally we reached the bottom of the slope. A rush of white waters opposed us, but we plunged in without much attempt to find a ford, and emerged dripping on the other side.

Billy was awaiting us, together with the dogs, now utterly crushed under the sudden realization that it was dark, and

neither fire nor supper was forthcoming. They were beginning to regret certain scorned mush of happier days.

An almost invincible disbelief in the possibility of comfort overcame us. Motion seemed rather to bring to acuter realization our chilly state than to start our blood to circulation. It required faith, faith deep and real, to force us to the unpacking, to the necessary search for fuel, to the patient labor of ignition.

The horses wandered rather dispiritedly away in search of the scanty short-hair grass of this altitude. After much chopping for the heart of the firewood, we managed to start a little blaze. It grew, and we gathered close. After a time we began to feel a trifle less numb. One of us summoned courage to explore among stiff and wet canvases in search of the grub bags and the utensils. We began on hot tea, and then plucked up

heart for the trouble of slicing bacon, and so on gradually to a full and satisfactory meal. Tuxana and Pepper huddled close and shivered violently in the effort to throw off the chill. Pepper curled up in a ball; but Tuxana sat on her tail, both hind feet pathetically and ludicrously off the ground, blinking her bull-terrier pink-rimmed eyes. We felt recovered enough by now to laugh at her.

Then slowly it became borne in on our now torpid faculties that something yet remained to be done. Not the dishes—no, indeed—they must wait for the morning. But out of the cold, wet blackness beyond the firelight we had to conjure sleeping places. The task was not in itself great; but it had on top of it the weight of a long, hard day.

Reluctantly we lit the little candle-lantern and looked about. It was a case of hard rock that night, for every depres-

sion of shale was soggy with water, and boughs there were none at all. So Billy and I spread our tarpaulin and the quilt to soften things a trifle, and the gray army blanket, and crawled in shivering. Poor old Tuxana, wet as a fish, begged hard; but the best we could do for her was a saddle blanket. Into this she retired utterly. Pepper, with the combined inconsequence of youth, reliance on a thick wire coat, and personal imbecility of disposition, declined to remain covered, so we left her to her own devices by the spluttering fire.

We shivered for awhile, then the animal heat accumulated sufficiently beneath our coverings, and we fell deeply asleep. About two o'clock I awoke, the side of me next the rock feeling as though it were flattened out, like meat that has been in a refrigerator. My nose was as cold as a dog's. Overhead light clouds were hur-

rying by. Through them shone some very pale and chilly stars.

The next morning we arose rather later than usual. It had cleared somewhat, but the air was bitterly cold. After breakfast we assembled about a recklessly large fire and discussed what was next to be done.

The decision made—I forget what it was—we caught up the horses. Then it became evident that fate had taken matters out of our hands, for Jenny's legs, by daylight, proved to be more cut than we had supposed. They had already swollen. We could guess without much effort that Jenny would be unfit to travel for at least ten days. So we put my riding saddle on the cripple, transferred her pack to Coco, and Billy to my own horse, Bullet.

"I will climb the ridge again," said I, "and look for a route over from the other cañon. You can make camp at the

meadow where the two cañons come together, and I will join you about dark."

They filed way, and once more I addressed myself to the ascent.

In climbing a mountain at a high elevation you start out comfortably enough. The first symptom of trouble is a shortening of your breath, the next a violent pounding of your heart; then come sensations of heavy weights attached to your feet, ringings of your ears, blurring of your eyes, perhaps a slight giddiness. It is now time to stop. After a moment the landscape steadies, the symptoms subside. You are ready for another little spurt. The moment you stop, or strike level ground, you are all right; but at the highest elevations, even a slight incline or a light burden will bring you immediate distress. At just what elevation this distress becomes acute depends on your individual make-up. Some people cannot

The way was very rough.

stand even six or seven thousand feet. Billy is fit for navigation up to about thirteen thousand. Beyond that point she is subject to a seizure that stiffens her out as though by a stroke of paralysis. Snow on the forehead brings her around all right, and luckily snow is abundant that high. I personally have never been beyond fifteen thousand feet; but that altitude, though rendering rapid exertion extremely laborious, did not affect me painfully.

An hour brought me to the snow. I could see very well how to get up through a chimney were it not for that snow. But in present conditions the case was absolutely hopeless. The slant was such that even in soft footing a horse would have difficulty to keep from falling, but now the substratum of ice made the passage absolutely impossible. In addition, the snow itself lay in sharp edges and cups

several feet deep, like a gigantic muffin mold of innumerable hollows. One had either to attempt the knife edges of the partitions, or to climb laboriously in and out of the hollows. Generally the result turned out to be a disconcerting compromise between the two.

However, another twenty minutes' hard work took me to the top. There I quickly traversed the T where the two cañons headed against the ridge, and stood once more looking out over Deadman's Cañon.

The great black masses of the Kaweah Group were blacker still with a formidable thunder storm slowly gathering about its peaks. So sinister, gloomy and forbidding did the cañons and crevices become as the light was blotted from their glittering snows and rocks that I could not rid myself of the notion that the very essence of the world was undergoing the

transformation of some catastrophe. It had started yonder, under those black peaks. It was spreading, as spilled water spreads. Shortly it would kill that broad, smiling sunny meadow far beneath. Then it would creep up the slope below. Then it would swallow me.

A peal of thunder seemed to tear apart the stillness with the voice of a command. One after another the mountains echoed back the submissive response, as though reporting themselves at their posts for the sinister change that was to befall them. I thought to hear a faint and distant roaring. A gray veil suddenly shut out the peaks.

This seemed to break the spell of portent. I noted that the air currents and the configuration of the mountains were likely to carry the storm eastward, and so set to work.

I scouted until I found, about fifteen

hundred feet down, some stunted trees and feed. Then I worked out a route to them. Then I built as much trail as was necessary. This took me a long time. Whether we should be able to do the other fifteen hundred feet down to the green meadow and the round lake did not matter for the present. It was enough if we could penetrate so far into the enemy's country, sure of sustenance and a space for the soles of our feet. While engaged at this work I came across a big drift of pink snow. Pink snow is a little hard to believe in, but it exists. I understand that the tint comes from the pollen of some flower. The fact remains that the very substance of the snow is pink, decidedly pink, like pink cotton; and when you step on it, it crushes into an appearance of pale blood. When I first saw it far above me, on the slope of a mountain, I thought I must have chanced on some anachronistic

glow that had happened around too late for sunrise or too early for sunset.

By seven o'clock I had reached the forks of the cañons. The thunder shower had increased to a cloud burst, and the cloud burst had overtaken the pack train. So violently had the water beaten down that the horses refused to proceed. They ran their heads into thick spruce trees and declined to budge. Billy and Wes had to sit there and take it. Billy thought it great fun; but, as Wes pointed out, she owned a poncho. Wes did not, but retained a semblance of triumphant good humor because by some mysterious method of his own he had kept his tobacco and cigarette papers dry.

The ground was soaked, and miniature gullies had worked down through the pine needles. We built a big fire, turned out the horses and so once more slept with the great and complex voice of the river.

THE PERMANENT CAMP

VIII

THE PERMANENT CAMP

After far wandering a permanent camp is a great refreshment to the spirit.

You start in animated by the utmost vigor. There are so many things to be done, and they all occur to your mind at once. After breakfast you seize the axe and take to the brush. The search for straight saplings forking at required heights becomes absorbing. You cut them and drag them to camp and stick them in their appointed places. There is an amplitude to these preparations in delicious contrast to the direct utilitarianism of your camp-making while on trail. So must have felt the founder of Cologne Cathedral, his soul big and tranquil with

the thought of the three hundred years of building that were to follow. You make a shelter and a bed. The former is beautiful and permanent; we put up the little balloon silk tent, which heretofore had been used only as a pack cloth. The bed you arrange carefully, smoothing the ground with the back of the axe swung adze-wise between your legs, laying parallel two generous lengths of logs well pegged to prevent rolling, filling between them first with dry pine needles, then with balsam fans thatched carefully springy side up. It is fun to cut balsam. The thicket is warm with the radiation of sun from fragrant piney things. You clip and clip away with the hatchet, bathed in tepid odors and buzzy sounds. It is a leisurely occupation that you cannot hurry, and so you lapse gladly into that half-dreamy state to be acquired only in the woods, wherein the golden afternoon

seems to comprise several eternities. Then you return to camp, and begin feverishly the construction of a table.

It is a very ingenious table, supported by three saplings suspended between two trees. Across them you lay wands, and over the wands you spread your oilcloth. The bench you make of hewn logs (be sure they are dry, otherwise you may stick to your seat), supported on cross-pieces between forked branches driven into the ground. You place your eating utensils, and feel the creator's joy.

Then remain a dozen other affairs. The fireplace is elaborate; the saddles are conceded a rack. And you make a woodpile.

Ordinarily, while traveling, you cook with what you can pick up, or chop in two by a stroke or so of the axe. Now you cut the nearest pine logs into lengths, and lug these lengths into camp on your shoulders, staggering uncertainly. And

then you hit with your axe a mighty whack lengthwise, and insert a wedge of hard wood in the crack thus made, and beat the wedge in until it is buried, and then insert another wedge lower down, until at last the log splits in two with a great tearing of wood fibers. Whereupon you attack the halves in like manner, and then the quarters, until in the final result you are possessed of a number of slender split posts. You lay one of these posts over your chopping log. A full swing of the axe bites deep and slanting. You reverse the blade and whack mightily on the end. The slender post breaks at the point of the axe cut, and at last you lay aside with pride the first stick of firewood.

There is a joy in the clean, accurate labor—a pleasure in stretching your muscles. And the gleaming yellow piles grow almost like magic.

By now you are fully in the vein. You are tired; but you do not know enough to feel so. A score of desirable little tasks crowd on your intention. You will put up shelves, and make a meat safe, and sweep the forest floor, and dig a garbage pit, and rope in the camp, and——

"Look here!" complains your companion, "don't you think we'd better call this a day? I'm hungry!"

You glance up with surprise. The pines are silhouetting against the west. Shadows are half-tree high already, and the coolness of evening is creeping very cautiously, very slowly down through the lowest thickets. The sparrows and viros seem to have fallen silent. A pensive melody of thrushes steals in and out of the forest aisles.

You straighten your back, and suddenly feel very tired. The day is indeed done.

And next morning very early you awaken and look straight up at the sky. The pine tops touch it shyly—you could almost imagine that gently swaying in the wind they had brushed the stars away. A great singing of birds fills the air. So innumerable are the performers that it is difficult to distinguish the individuals. The result might be called a tremendous and composite chattering. Only here the tone of the chattering is supremely musical, so that the forest seems to be echoing to the voice of some single melodious creature.

Near by a squirrel, like a fussy little old gentleman, jerks about nervously.

"Dear, dear!" says he. "*Look* at those people! *Look* at those people!"

After he has repeated this a few score of times he fusses away, probably to report to the proper officers that he must object, he really must object to such per-

Among big, rugged cliff débris.

sons being admitted to his club. The sun strikes through the woods and glorifies a dogwood just to the left of its direct line of illumination. The light partly reflects from, partly shines through the delicate leaves, until the whole bush becomes ethereal, a gently glowing soul of itself. You stretch luxuriously, and extend your legs, and an unwonted feeling of satisfaction steals over you. You wonder why. The reason comes in due time. It is this: a whole glorious woodland day lies before you, and in it is no question of pack rope, horse or trail. You can do just exactly as much or as little as you please.

Probably you elect to putter around camp. There are innumerable things to do, and you can have fun at any one of them. To sit straddle a log, tinkering away at a new latigo for your saddle is joy, especially if you can look up every now and then to a very blue sky not

much beyond very tall trees. Little items of repair have long been awaiting this leisure. Also there is laundry, with a glorious chance to wash everything washable, even down to the long-suffering dish rag. I should advise one of the cold-water soaps, as it is difficult to scare up anything big enough to boil clothes in.

And if you are fond of cooking, now is your chance to indulge in the most astounding culinary orgies. Simple puddings, cakes, and other bakings are quite within the reach of the ingenious camp cook: there is necessary only the widest possible interpretation of receipts, and the completest audacity in substitution. If you have no eggs, why, never mind. Perhaps dried prunes will do. Try it, anyway. I once made a very good pudding out of the remains of boiled macaroni, some cold cornmeal mush, sugar, cinnamon and raisins. This when baked

through, and well browned atop proved to be marvelously popular. I admit it does not sound very good.

The cooking zeal is cumulative. There comes a day when you cook from morning until evening, and then triumphantly announce a feast. If you possess real enthusiasm, you get up menus and table decorations. Here is one we gave at Lake Charlotte, eleven thousand feet up, in honor of the birthday of our old friend Spoopendyke. Your true celebrant in the woods always makes his feast an occasion, even if he has to invent one.

Clam Soup à la Dieu Sait Quoi

Fried Trout à la Lac Charlotte

Bacon à l'Axlegrease

Scrambled Eggs à la Tin Can

Bread *Corn Bread* *Biscuits*

Vegetables à l'Abercrombie

Boiled Potatoes *Baked Beans*

Rice Pudding *Strawberries* *Spice Cake*

Nuts *Raisins*

On the reverse came the

Wine List

Tea	*In the Large Pot*
Coffee	*In the Small Pot*
Cocoa	*Make it Yourself, Darn You*
Water	*Go to the Spring*
Lemonade	*In the Small Bottle*
Whiskey	*Drink, $10; Smell, 25c.*

Cigars *Pipes* *Cigarettes*

After a brilliant climax of this sort, you generally settle back to a more leisurely gait. Other things engage your attention. You hunt, you fish, you explore the immediately surrounding country.

And then little by little you run down, like a clock that has not been wound. There is plenty of venison in camp; fishing palls. You lie around during endless golden hours, shifting with the sun, watching the rainbow colors in your eyelashes, soaking in comfort and rest as thirsty ground takes up water. In the

evening you swap yarns and hold academic discussions around the campfire. If it were not for the fact that you have to chop wood for that campfire you could take root and your brains would turn out budding little green branches. The academic discussions are lazily delivered, and irresponsible, oh, utterly irresponsible! The ordinary rules of coherency and probability are quite relaxed. You hear the most extraordinary stories, and still more extraordinary theories.

"I remember when I was foreman of a construction gang in the mountains north of here, the company used to buy condemned army supplies. For awhile they ran short of lubricating oil, so they used to pack the axle boxes of the cars with slices of salt pork; it worked fine.

"Well, I used to pride myself on running a mighty nifty camp, then, and I had a Chink that could put up a real feed.

One day old Harrington himself dropped off on me with some of his city friends, so as soon as I could break away I hiked over to the cook shack.

"'Sing Hop,' says I, 'old man come. Rustle plenty good chop, poco pronto.'

"'No hab got meat,' says Sing Hop. 'Him no come.'

"Well, that looked bad for the reputation of my camp, now didn't it? Then an idea came to me. I sneaked around the other side of the train, opened one of the axle boxes and took out a dozen slices of the condemned pork they had packed in there for lubricating. Old Harrington said he'd never eaten better meat."

You exclaim, politely, a little doubtfully. The old sinner presses down the tobacco in his pipe and cocks his eye at you.

"The joke of it was," says he, "that Sing Hop never had to touch that meat.

The friction-heat of the axles had cooked it just right."

"You'll never go to heaven," murmurs some one, kicking the fire. A column of sparks startles the shadows into momentary flight.

"Speaking of heaven," continues the sinner cheerfully, "did you ever hear of the two old Arizonians who met for the first time in ten years? Of course, they had to celebrate. By and by they got to the tearful stage of the game, and began to mourn the absence of Jim. Jim had been dead fifteen years. That didn't make any difference, however.

" 'It jes' spoils thish evenin' that Jim ain't yere,' sobbed one. 'How dear ol' Jim would have enjoyed this evenin'!' "

They mourned awhile in hopeless gloom, and then one saw a little glimmer of light in the situation.

" 'Nev' mind!' said he, brightening up,

'when I die an' go to heaven, I'll tell dear ol' Jim about thish evenin'!'

"'Yes,' said the other earnestly, 'but s'pose dear ol' Jim didn't go to heaven?'

"'Then,' replied the first quite unalarmed, 'then *you* tell him!'"

Every one smokes and stares into the heart of the fire. A glowing log crumples at the middle, and sinks to coals. The flames die to blues and lucent pale-greens. In the partial re-establishment of darkness the stars look down between the trees.

"I wonder," says some one, dreamily, "what will be the first message flashed from those other worlds when at last communication is established; what bit of information out of all our boundless curiosity we will ask for? Will we hit for the fundamentals? Will we inquire, 'Do you die, up there? do you hope? do you fear? do you love?'"

"Probably some trust will get hold of

it, and the first message will be: 'Use Broggins' Tongue Titillators, the best Bon-Bon,' " replied the brutal member.

"Well, after all, it won't matter," insists the idealist unabashed. "The important thing will not be the message, but the fact that it is the *first* message."

A tentative chilly little night wind ventures across the dying fire. The incandescent coals, with their halls and galleries magnificent, sink together with a faint sound. In a moment they begin to film over. The features of your companions grow indistinct. Outside noises come more clearly to your attention, for strangely enough the mere fact of firelight seems to hold at a distance not only the darkness but the sounds that people it. The rush of waters, the sighing of winds, the distant mournful owl-notes, or sleepy single chirp of some momentarily awakened day-bird—these come closer with the

reassured shadows creeping down to pounce on the dying fire.

In the group some one raps a pipe sharply twice. Some one else stretches and sighs. The stir of leaves tells of reluctant risings.

"Time to turn in, boys; good-night," says one.

In a moment you and the faint glow in the ashes are left alone together.

We made a good camp under tall trees. Then we produced the flour sack containing our much-read "library"; destroyed arrears in the laundry business; shaved elaborately, and so prepared ourselves for a good time.

First of all we were hungry for fresh meat, so Wes and I rode down the river to get a deer. We tied the horses at the edge of the snow-brush, made our way laboriously up to the castellated tops of the ridges where the bucks lie to harden their

antlers, and crept along, slowly looking with all our eyes. The early morning was too much of an effort after our hard work of the past few weeks, so now the time was late afternoon. In the before-evening coolness our game should be afoot, stepping daintily in and out among the manzanita and snow-brush, nipping a mouthful here and there, pausing at every step or so to look watchfully about over the landscape. Pepper and Tuxana, chipmunks scornfully forgotten, trailed along at our heels. They understood perfectly that important affairs were forward, and stepped with almost the over-elaborate caution of a schoolboy on the stalk for imaginary Indians.

The signs were numerous. Tracks crossed and recrossed the ridge, all of them round and full buck-tracks. The more pointed doe footprints would be found at a lower elevation, where, in the

shelter of denser growth, they would be taking care of their fawns. After an hour Wes, who for the moment was in the lead, stopped short and began cautiously to level his rifle. I stepped to one side and looked. About a hundred yards away, above the brush, I could just make out two spike horns and a pair of ears pointed inquiringly in our direction. The horns looked not unlike the branches of dead manzanita, and the ears blended with the foliage in that strange semi-transparent manner possessed alike by wild creatures and woodland shadows. Tuxana and Pepper quivered. A tense stillness seemed all at once to grip fast the universe, a stillness which would require a mighty effort to break.

"Bang!" spoke old Meat-in-the-Pot.

A swift compact cloud of dust immediately sprang up from the spot where the deer had stood. A thousand echoes rever-

berated from cliff to forest and back again. The necessity for caution, for silence, for slow and deliberate motion seemed instantaneously to have broken into these flying fragments of sound. I sprang to the top of a boulder, Pepper uttered a single excited yap, Wes spoke aloud.

"Missed, by thunder!" said he.

In the tones of Wes' voice was deep disgust. Wes is an excellent rifle shot, and rarely misses.

I could see the bushes swing with the deer's progress down hill, and occasionally I caught a momentary glimpse of his high, springing jumps. Evidently he intended half circling the hill. Almost could I get enough of a sight to shoot, and the expectation constantly recurring, and as constantly frustrated, set me in an agony of desire to take the cause of events into my own hands, to shift and adjust

them and order them. Wes, screened in by thick brush, was grumbling away behind me.

"He was lying down," he growled, "and I under shot. He was lying down; if I'd had any sense at all, I could 'a seen that with my mouth!"

Unexpectedly matters adjusted themselves. The deer, abandoning his first intention, turned sharp to the right through an open space. I tried to aim so that the bullet would catch him as he struck the ground at the finish of one of his buck jumps—really the only way to hit a running deer. At the shot he went down in a cloud of dust.

"I got him!" I yelled.

But the deer seemed only momentarily stunned, for he was almost instantly afoot, and off again with apparently as much vigor as ever. Afterward we found that my bullet had gone through the

shoulder without either breaking the bone or entering the body cavity.

At this point Tuxana appeared, made a flying leap at the deer's throat; missed, but tried the next best that offered itself. In this case the next best happened to be the deer's tail. That she did not miss.

It was much better than gunny sacks. I do not doubt that in the brief moment during which Tuxana remained on terra firma, and while her mental processes were still unconfused, a great illumination came to her of many things heretofore mysterious—of the reason for gunny sacks, and why dogs delight to swing from them, and how they are intended in the scheme of things as a training and a preparation for such crises of life as this. And so Tuxana sailed away, hitting the scenery on an average of once every hundred feet. The last I saw of her for that

moment was as the deer jumped a log. Her four feet were rigidly extended in four different directions, uncertain as to which one would alight first, and how. And in her soul I knew there was deep joy.

We followed the trail for a quarter of a mile. Then we came to a stream flowing among boulders. In the middle of the stream and half over a miniature fall lay the deer. Firmly attached to its tail was Tuxana, the bull dog, her sturdy legs braced back to hold the great weight against the current, her jaws clamped, the water pouring over her flanks. When we approached she rolled her little pink-rimmed eyes at us. In them we read satisfaction with the condition of affairs. She gave no other sign.

We put a bullet through the deer's head, hauled him—and Tuxana—ashore, and set about the job of preparing him

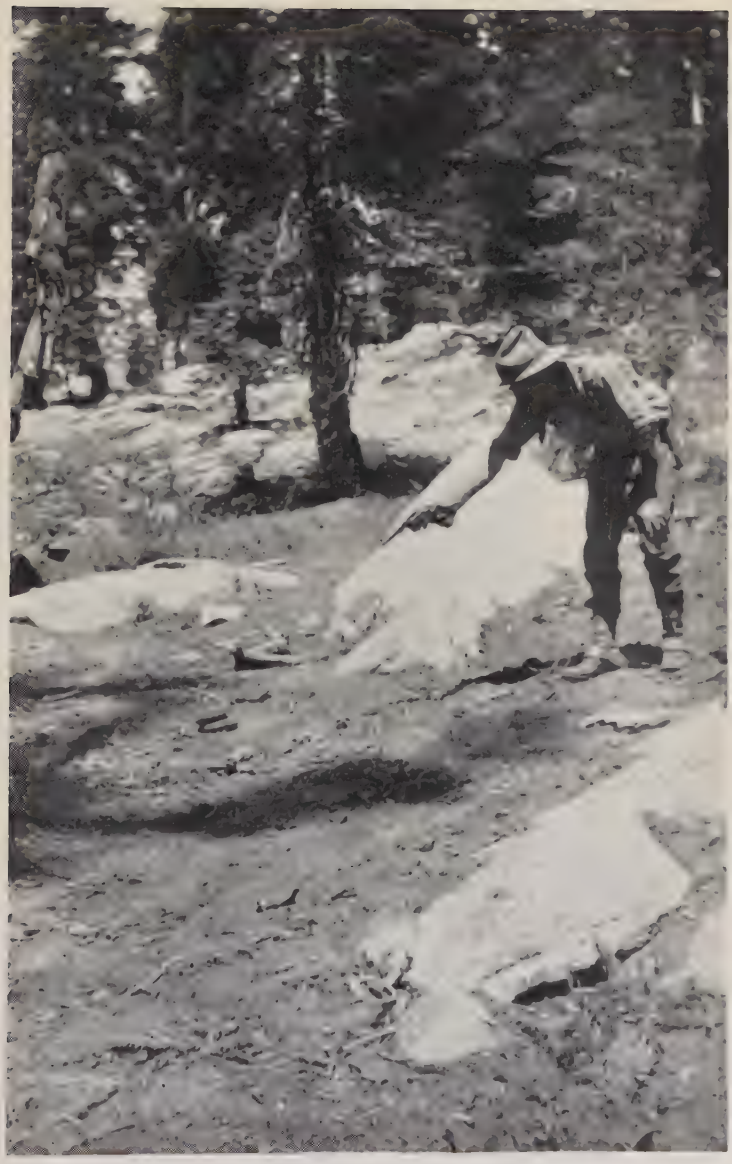
for transportation. Tuxana let go with reluctance. It was the culminating moment of her emotional existence. She held herself ready to give any further assistance that might be needed.

The mountain deer is not large, and this was only a spike buck. We cleaned him, cut off his head and hocks, and tied each hind leg to its opposite foreleg. Thus he resembled a rather bulky knapsack, with loops through which to thrust the arms. We fed the "lights" to the appreciative dogs, and then carried the venison to the horses.

The meat supply thus assured, we felt privileged to loaf a bit. About four of the afternoon we used to start out fishing. Roaring River is not particularly well stocked, but we could get a mess, and it was extremely pleasant to make our way through the thickets, over and around the rocky points where the bluffs came down,

to the one little spot where the rushing white water paused behind the boulder. Trout fishing anywhere is one of the best of sports. Trout fishing in the mountains is superlative. The forest trees, the sheets of granite, the rush and boil of the water, the innumerable busy bird voices, the cool high air, all seem to fill the immediate world with movement and bustle; yet you have but to raise your eyes to be calmed by the great snow peaks lying serene beneath the intense blue skies of the higher altitudes. And then quite early in the afternoon the shadows begin to climb the easterly wall; and as they do so the upper peaks become ethereal, until at the last, after your own little world has fallen to twilight, they glow and palpitate with a pulsating soap-bubble iridescence.

One day it happened that we killed two rattlesnakes, which was quite extraordi-



The six-shooter terminated the argument with the rattlesnake.

nary so high in the mountains. The campfire talk that evening centered on the reptiles. We swapped the usual yarns and experiences; indulged in the customary argument as to remedies. Wes told of the chicken which when killed, split, and tied fresh to the wound clung there valiantly for two hours, and then, "black as your hat, sir!" fell off of its own accord. Billy and I agreed that this was marvelous. Wes likewise gave as his disillusioned opinion that whiskey is not efficacious. Why? Well, he knew of a man who, while very drunk, was bitten, and who forthwith died. And, of course, in this case the whiskey had a head start on the poison.

"Wes," said I, "did you ever know, in your experience, of a man dying from snake bite?"

"Oh, yes," said he.

"Tell me about it."

"Well," he began, "a friend of Jim Brown's, down in Tulare County, was bit, and Jim told me——"

And that is about the usual answer to such question. During a fairly extended experience in snake countries I have made it a point to proffer that inquiry, and up to date I have found just three men in whose veracity I had confidence who claim to have seen a man dead of snake bite. Hundreds could prove cases by the next fellow; and I have no doubt that the publication of this will bring forth many scornful expostulants who have seen whole cohorts succumb. But such have been the results of my own careful and extended interrogations.

This does not mean that the rattlesnake does not inflict a fatal bite; but merely that the chances of such a bite, even in a snake country, are exceedingly small. The reptile usually begins to rattle before you

are within ten yards of him, and is always more anxious to retreat than to court trouble. When he does not rattle, the chances are that he is too torpid, either from cold or feeding, to strike at all. Even if trodden on at such a time, his stroke is apt to be feeble and slow. Another element of safety resides in the fact that leather or even thick clothing will generally wipe the venom back along the grooved fang, so that even if the skin is actually broken, the probabilities of infection are small. At such a juncture the supposed victim twines himself around the whiskey jug, and passes away in an attack of delirium tremens. Add to these considerations even the ordinary precaution of a sharp lookout and an occasional stone rolled ahead into especially snaky-looking places, and your risk is not worth mentioning.

As I have said, the rattlesnake's main

desire is to be let alone. I have killed hundreds, and I never knew but one case of the snake's taking the aggressive—in the sense of coming forth to attack. This was a large diamond-back that had twined himself about the roots of a manzanita. We wanted his skin, and so had spent some time poking at him with a stick, trying to get his head into such a position that a shot at it would not injure his body. Evidently he got tired of this, for after a few moments he uncoiled, came out from his shelter, and advanced on one of us. His mouth was opened wide, like the snakes on the circus posters, his head was erect, and he had every appearance of determination. He advanced straight toward the Tenderfoot, rattling vigorously. That individual promptly stepped aside, whereupon the snake likewise changed his course. This was repeated several times, so that we could have no doubt that he was

actually on the aggressive, was actually trying to get at our friend.

Three fallacies on this subject I have often seen printed. One is that a snake cannot rattle unless coiled. He can. I have often seen them moving rapidly across the trail, head and tail both up, buzzing away like an alarm clock. The second fallacy is that he cannot strike unless coiled. He can. I admit that the zone of danger is somewhat more contracted, but it exists. The third is that he *never* can strike more than half his own length. This last is ordinarily true, but it is an unsafe rule to rely on. Once in a deep, hot cañon I dismounted to kill a rather small rattler coiled against a rock. I selected what seemed to me to be a long enough pole, made one hit—and was missed by just about six inches! Now I stood at least five feet from that snake, and he was not over thirty inches long. From

him to me was slightly down hill; but the especial point was that the reptile had by the merest chance happened to get a purchase for his spring from the rock against which he was coiled. That was abnormal, of course, but it wouldn't have helped me any if he had landed.

The best way is to give them a wide berth. If you have a rifle and enough ammunition, just point the muzzle in his direction, hold steady for a moment, and pull the trigger. You will get his head every time. He will do all the necessary aiming himself, as his instinct is to thrust his head directly toward the nearest dangerous object. If, however, you have no rifle ammunition to throw away, then use your six-shooter. Only in this event you will have to be your own marksman.

It is astonishing how instantaneously the human nerves react to the shrill buzz. A man who has never heard it before, rec-

ognizes it at once. And the moment the sound vibration strikes his ear-drum—long before it has had a chance of interpretation by the brain—his muscles have accomplished for him a record-breaking broad jump.

Late one evening in the southern part of the mountains Wes and I were returning to camp after an unsuccessful deer hunt. Our way led down a steep slope covered with pine needles. We swung along rapidly, six feet at a stride. Suddenly I noticed just about two yards ahead of Wes, who was preceding me, a rattlesnake crossing our way. My companion's next step would bring him fairly atop the reptile. I yelled, and at the same instant Wes must have seen his danger. His stride did not alter its rhythm, nor did he appear to put forth the least increase of muscular effort. But he fairly sailed into space.

Wes told me another yarn of how he and a young fellow, occupying overnight a rangers' cabin, nearly got into serious trouble.

"I was sitting on a bench," said Wes, "and the Kid was lying on the bunk reading, his head on one hand. I looked up, and nearly froze stiff when I saw a snake coiled right under his armpit, in the hollow of his arm. I knew if I said anything the Kid would move, and that would be about all. And, of course, I couldn't do nothin'. The snake was too close to his body for me to shoot. So I sat there figurin' away to myself; and I guess I must have prayed that was an interesting book. Anyway, finally I sneaked over, and I reached out, and I got that Kid by the wrist he was leaning his head on, and I give him one good yank! I reckon I was so scared I overdid the matter, for that Kid hit so hard against

the other wall that it mighty nigh killed him."

Wes weighs about two hundred and is strong as a horse. I did not envy the Kid's predicament either before or after the discovery of the snake.

We told these and other tales about the campfire. That night Billy, too, had her experience with snakes.

When Billy retires for slumber she wears a sort of blanket robe with a peaked hood, which she pulls up over her head. About two in the morning she awoke with a start, thoroughly convinced that something was wrong. After a moment her faculties adjusted themselves, and she turned cold about the heart as she realized that a snake had crawled into the blanket, and was coiled between her head and the hood.

She did not know what to do. If she moved, even to awaken me, the snake dis-

turbed in the warm comfort for the sake of which he had made his invasion, would probably strike. The minutes dragged by in an agony. Finally, Billy reasoned that she was doomed to be bitten anyway, and that a bite in the hand was preferable to one in the head, so with a degree of very real courage she softly inserted her hand in the hood, poised it over what felt to be the thickest coil, pounced suddenly —and nearly yanked herself out of bed by the braid of her hair! *

THE PASS—Page 142, New folio—Old folio, 124

* Since writing the above Pepper has been bitten by a rattlesnake. The reptile struck her just back of the ankle joint. Almost immediately the whole leg and shoulder swelled enormously and became exceedingly painful. I carried her over my saddle for some miles and then went into camp for several days in order to give her a chance of recovery. The poor pup had a mighty sick time of it. The leg and foot were puffed out and as stiff as a club. Of course she could bear no weight on it—in fact the lightest touch to the ground caused her to cry dolefully. At night she sometimes took an hour to lie down. The swelling ran down the left side of her chest in a great welt. At the end of two days the symptoms began to subside with marvelous quickness. By the morning of the third she was as well as ever, and followed me afoot over Shuteye Pass.

A week slipped by before we knew it. The only incidents were occasional noon thunder storms, and the sight of a bear. This I saw, but as a fishing rod was my deadliest possession, I did not get him. A consequent hunt resulted in a yearling cub, which made good meat, but was not otherwise interesting.

At the end of the week we realized that Jenny's legs would not much longer serve as an excuse. So we prepared for our monthly job of shoeing the animals.

If I were the only blacksmith in the world I would charge fifty dollars for shoeing a horse. It is the most back-breaking, tiresome job I know of. We carried the malleable "Goodenough" shoe, which could be fashioned cold; but even with that advantage each animal seemed to develop enough feet to furnish out a centipede. Calamity Jane appeared to look on us as a rest cure. Whenever we

got a foot of hers off ground, she promptly leaned her entire weight on that leg, so we slung her up. Dinkey, with customary maliciousness, tried every mischievous trick to bother us; but we settled her promptly by throwing and hog-tying. To add to our troubles the punch broke. We had no forge, of course, so we were under the necessity of burying it until red in the hottest fire we could make of cones and pitchpine, beating it with a hatchet, and tempering it as best we could in bacon grease. After three attempts we made it serviceable and went ahead. But we were mighty glad when the last nail was driven.

There is a finality about the abandonment of a permanent camp to be experienced in no other household removal. You have made this home in the wilderness and even the short period of your residence has given it an individuality.

Now you leave it, and you are absolutely certain that this particular abiding place you will never see again. The moment your back is turned, the forest begins her task of resolving it to its original elements. Chipmunks and squirrels and little birds make away quickly with the débris. The trees sift down the forest litter. Already beneath the soil are germinating seeds which shall spring up to cover the place where your bed had lain, and the very ashes of your campfires are fertilizing them. Next year you may return to this identical spot. But you will not resume your place in your old camp. A new camp is to be made from new materials amid new surroundings. The old has vanished forever as completely as the smoke of the fires that used to eddy down through the trees.

So when the time came, we packed our animals and hit the trail eagerly enough,

it is true, for we were well rested; but a little regretfully, also. The camp by Roaring River had been a good camp. We had enjoyed it. And though we knew the voice of the waters would continue to call through the forest, we knew also that in all probability it would not call to us again.

THE SIDE HILL CAMP

IX

THE SIDE HILL CAMP

The horses, too, hated to make a start. Dinkey, in especial, uttered the most heart-rending moans and groans as we cinched her up. And as for Calamity Jane, her long ears missed support entirely, and hung as the force of gravity directed.

Tuxana and Pepper, however, were delighted. They had long since terrorized all the chipmunks and Douglas squirrels and ground bears of the immediate vicinity. When we whistled "boots and saddles," as was our custom, all fell in line obediently enough, but the two dogs fairly frisked.

For several hours we wound leisurely

up the defiles of Deadman's Cañon, ascending the bits of steep trails up the terraces, crossing the knee-deep meadows between them, admiring the straight lofty cliffs on either hand, with their tiny fringe of pine trees on top inconceivably remote, their jutting crags, like monstrous gargoyles overlooking an abyss, and their smooth sheer sweeps in syncline of glacier-polished granite. At the foot of these cliffs were steep slopes of rock débris, thrown down by the action of frost and sun. Among them had sprouted hardy bushes, affording a cover in which we looked in vain for a possible bear. The cañon bottom contained meadows, and strips of cottonwood and quaking asp, as well as scattered junipers and cedars. A beautiful stream, the west fork of Roaring River, dropped from one clear pool to another, or meandered between clean-cut banks of sod.

A treacherous snow field.

A number of ground bear lived in the rocks. These are animals of the woodchuck family, about thirty or forty pounds in weight, possessed of an impudent spirit and beautiful long fur. As they amble over the boulders, they look to be much larger than they are. Their chief delight was to stand directly over an impregnable hiding place, and then to utter insults in a shrill, clear voice, which has earned them farther north the name of *siffleur*. At once the dogs, quivering with eagerness, would dash away. Louder and louder sounded the stream of vituperation. And then, at the very latest moment, the ground bear would quietly disappear. Pepper and Tuxana would butt their noses against the very unyielding spot where he had been. At the same instant his first cousin, residing some hundreds of feet distant, would begin to mention to Pepper the ridiculousness of her

fuzzy bobtail, and to Tuxana the impression produced by her small pink-rimmed eyes, whereupon the dogs would scramble away after this new enemy. It must have been very hard on their nervous systems, and I have no doubt that the ground bears, who are very wise and cynical in appearance, counted on these tactics to reduce their pursuers to an early imbecility. Late in the day, however, we avenged our own animals by shooting a ground bear. His carcass we used for dog meat, which we lacked; his tallow we employed for boot grease, of which we stood much in need; and his fur we gave to Billy, who admired it. Thus his end was fitting.

We camped that night in the very last grove at the timber line. Next morning we were afoot literally by daylight, and it was very cold. The old trail to the prospect holes part way up the mountains

we found steep and difficult, but not dangerous. By ten we had reached, at the same point, its end, and the beginning of the snow.

Here we discovered that Modesto had cast a shoe—one of his nice new ones that we thought we had nailed on fast. Nothing remained but to unpack Old Slob, who carried the repair kits, and to undertake the job then and there. Wes volunteered, and while he was at it, we looked about us with some curiosity.

The miners had laboriously leveled in the granite débris two platforms for two tents. The remains of a rough forge stood near at hand. Beneath a stone still lingered, undissolved by the elements, the remains of a pack of cards. Two or three sticks of stove wood had escaped burning.

Now what do you suppose such men expect to make out of a dubious copper prospect in such a location? In the first

place, every pound of supplies would have to be packed from Millwood, heaven knows how many miles away or over how many mountains, and every pound of ore would have to be packed out. In the second place, it was now well on in August, yet the snows had barely receded. Two months of work a year at most are all a man can hope for at such an elevation. And to cap the apparent absurdity, the mineral to be mined is not one of the precious metals.

I know of half a dozen such propositions in the length of the Sierras. And often I have seen their owners going in to the properties, old, white-bearded men for the most part, with jolly, twinkling eyes and a fund of anecdotes. Inquiry brings out that they are from Stockton or Sacramento or Fresno or some other valley town, and that they have been coming into the mountains for an incredible num-

ber of years. When you speak to them of their mines, they always look mysterious, as though there were things of which they could not talk—yet. My theory is that these ancients are jolly and lovable old frauds. They live respectably in their valley towns all winter, attending to their business and their pew rent and their social duties as staid and proper citizens. But when summer comes, the old mountaineering blood begins to stir in them. They are ashamed frankly to follow their inclination. How would it look! What an example for the young men! Deacon Brown has got tired of work, so he's going out to be a hobo! And imagine the enormity in the eyes of an industrious neighborhood of a two or three months' vacation. So these delightful old hypocrites invent the legend of vast interests 'way up where the snow lies; and year after year they sneak back to haunts

flavored by long associations, where they do a little pick and drill work—for a man must save his own self-respect, and, besides, the game is interesting—and shoot a deer or so, and smoke a lot of strong, rank tobacco, and concoct wonderful things with onions in a covered and formidable frying pan, and just have a good time. They are engaging conspirators, and I advise you never to pass by one of their camps.

By this time Wes had finished his job. We repacked and continued on our way.

Thanks to my careful scouting of ten days before, we had no trouble at all in reaching the "saddle." At noon we called a halt there, ate our lunch, built a huge pile of rocks as a monument and congratulated ourselves that the worst was over. You see, we still clung to the Ranger's statement that once at the top

we would have no difficulty with the other side. Already we began to plan how we would camp at the lower border of the round meadow in the rock-bound cañon below us; how next day we would go on to Redwood Meadow, and by the 26th be at Kern Lake, and so on. This is a fatal practice. Just as soon as you begin to make up your mind that you will catch some trout, or do the washing, or something of that sort before supper, the trail is sure to lose itself, or develop unexpected difficulties, so that at the end you must cook by firelight. An inch on the map is a mighty deceiving thing.

In the meantime, however, having finished our hardtack and raisins, we poured about two spoonfuls of whiskey over a cupful of snow, and solemnly christened this place Elizabeth Pass, after Billy.*

*See S. E. corner of the Tehipite Quadrangle, U. S. Survey.

It proved to be a little over twelve thousand feet in elevation. Although we experienced some difficulty and consumed some little time in getting over, the delay was because of the necessity of looking out the best route. Subsequent travelers, by following our monuments, and the field notes given in the appendix, should have no difficulty, except at one place on the ledge, of getting through. Of the ledge, more hereafter. The route should prove a good short-cut between the south fork of the King's River and the headwaters of the Kaweah.

We cached a screw-top can in the monument. It contained a brief statement of names and dates, named the pass, and claimed for Billy the honor of being the first woman to traverse it. Then we took a last look on the tumult of mountains to the north, and addressed ourselves to the task of following, as far as it led, the

piece of trail I had constructed ten days before.

The descent for a thousand feet was almost suspiciously easy. We slid down a rather steep and stony ridge at right angles to the main system, turned sharp to the left across its shoulder, and so gained a shallow ravine. All this was over shale, stones, and angular rocks the size of your head, not to speak of half sunken ledges, down which the horses had to slide or jump. But for all that, the going, as granite country runs, was neither dangerous nor too difficult, and we congratulated ourselves that at this rate we would be able to test the coldness of the waters in the lake before even the early mountain sunset.

Up to the time we gained the head of the ravine we had traveled over uncompromising rock—and nothing else. Here, however, we waded at once knee deep into

full-blossomed blue lupins. They filled the depression between the lateral ridges, and flung themselves far up the slopes, hundreds and hundreds of acres of them, like a huge tapestry laid out to our honor. Their fragrance was almost overpowering, and their color paled even the intense blue of the heavens. Below they ran out into tuft-grass between the stones, and still below that were two scattered groves of lodge-pole pines and junipers.

We made our way with extra care through the lupins, for though they were beautiful, they masked the uncertainty of the footing. After awhile we came to the bunch grass, which was easier, and so through the thin mask of trees.

Below us the hill dropped off sheer in a tremendous plunge. We found afterward that it was about fifteen hundred feet. To the left we knew the upper basin to be on about the same level as our-

selves. From it leaped the Kaweah over the rim of the amphitheater on which we stood, vanished from sight, and reappeared in slender filaments feeling their way through the meadow below. To the right our side hill seemed to merge in more precipitous mountains. Below the meadow the river appeared to take another plunge to another level.

The problem, of course, was to find a way from the rim to the bottom of the amphitheater. We could see the opposite side, and part of one end. Dismounting, we examined the prospect carefully through a glass. Starting at the top we would follow out inch by inch the possibilities of descent. Always the most promising ledges ended in thin air or narrowed to the point of merging with the face of the cliffs. A single streak of green, almost perpendicular, and next the waterfall, offered the only possible way.

It might be grassy, on soil, in which case we would be able to cut in it a zigzag trail, or it might consist of bushes, which might or might not mask an impasse. Our side of the basin was, of course, concealed.

It was decided that I should explore on foot to the right and below. I resolved first of all to continue as far as possible to the right on our present level. The way led first through another steep and scattered grove, past a shale slide, and so out to the ledge.

The ledge was nothing more nor less than a break in the sheer granite sweep of a mountain some twenty-five hundred feet from summit to meadow. It was not a flat ledge, but rounded outward to the plunge. Where it joined the upper cliff a little soil had gathered, and on that soil had grown a tough, thick sod. This strip of sod, whose surface was steep as a

Looking down Elizabeth Pass — a jumble of mountain peaks.

roof, varied in width from one to several feet. I recognized the fact that while no horse could possibly walk on it, nevertheless we might be able to cut enough of a notch in it to afford footing. A cursory examination, however, soon turned me in another direction. At one point the ledge ceased for about twelve feet. Up to the beginning of that twelve feet the slender vein of sod ran unbroken; beyond that twelve feet it continued until it appeared to run out on shale. But between was nothing but hard, slippery granite, slanted away at an impossible angle to a final perpendicular drop of nearly a quarter of a mile. Unless one had a flying machine ferry, thought I, he would hardly cross horses over that gulf.

So I turned back. The face of the mountain below where we had paused was utterly impassable. It, too, consisted of a series of inclined ledges, disconnected,

and all pinching out to nothing. A man could get down afoot, by doing some dropping, some jumping, and a good deal of stout clinging. I did so, and shortly found myself looking far up the cliff and wondering how I had ever accomplished it.

That was not my pressing business for the moment, however. Turning to the left I hurried across the immense piles of débris that sloped steeply away from the cliff, crossed the stream below the waterfall, and commenced the ascent of the strip of green we had made out through our glasses.

At first I was enough encouraged to stick up a few tentative monuments. Then I struck a bad place. It is easy to slur over bad places when you are afoot. They are easy enough for you. I wanted awfully to climb over hastily and forget it, but I knew retribution would follow

later. So I canvassed all the possibilities as to that bad place, and ended by making a fresh start just below it. This time I got a trifle farther, had to reconsider again, and so made progress, a little at a time.

The mountain teased me up that way for about six hundred feet. Then she carelessly tossed a few hundred tons of angular rocks across the way. The bushes concealed them; but they were there, and it did not take me more than ten minutes to determine the utter impracticability of that as a way down. So I threw away circumspection and climbed rapidly back to the rim of the basin.

I found the party awaiting me eagerly.

"Which way?" called Wes.

"As near as I could tell," said I, "it is no way. There's a ledge over there to the west that peters out, but which I only looked at from a distance. It may look

better when you get nearer. Everywhere else is straight up and down."

"Well, let's tackle it."

"It's too big a proposition for to-day," said I, "we'd better camp."

"Where?" cried Billy, aghast.

"Here," said I.

"Why, it's right on a side hill!" she objected.

"It is," I agreed. "If you drop a kettle, it is going to roll off into space, and you'll never see it any more. The same to you, ma'am. But here's some bunch grass, and there's a bit of a stream in those big rocks yonder, and right by you is the only log of dry wood in this township."

We had a lot of fun making camp on that side hill. Using the back of the axe as a sort of pick, we managed to dig out below a boulder a level large enough to contain our fire irons. "Upstairs" fifty feet was another boulder. Above this

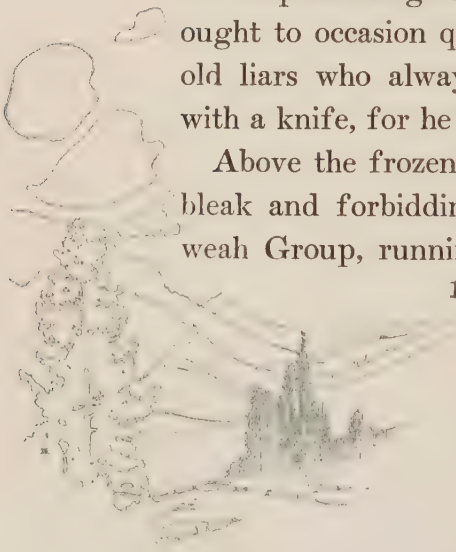
one Billy and I, with great labor, scraped a narrow trough in which to sleep. "Downstairs" Wes did the same. He contemplated the result somewhat dubiously.

"In this country," said he, "a man has to picket himself out to sleep."

Water we dipped up cup by cup into our folding canvas pail from a single place where it showed above the massive granite débris that filled its course. We could hear it singing up through the interstices of the cool, gray rocks. Wood we chopped from the single log. It was resinous, and burned quickly with a tremendous heat and much soot, but it sufficed for our simple cooking. Then we sat down and looked about us.

The meadow below was already decently on toward night. In the lake a number of boulders seemed to swim placidly above their own reflections. Oppo-

site was a long, black mountain of rock whose sides were too steep to retain snow, and which showed, therefore, in the more striking contrast to the white all around its base. We called it the frozen monster, because of its shape. It belonged evidently to the crocodile family, had a blunt head, short, sprawling legs, and a long, reptilian tail. The resemblance was perfect, and required but little of the exercise of the imagination such likenesses usually demand. On closing our eyes at night, the last thing we saw was this sleeping saurian, benumbed by the perpetual cold in which he dwelt. We amused ourselves speculating as to his awakening. It ought to occasion quite a stir among the old liars who always kill their grizzlies with a knife, for he was over a mile long.



Above the frozen monster towered the bleak and forbidding peaks of the Kaweah Group, running abruptly down to

where a bend in the cañon concealed what must have been the beginning of the pine country. All about us, thus, were great peaks, rugged granite, snows. We looked at them from the middle point; they were co-equal with us, on our own plane of existence, like gigantic comrades. In the next two days we acquired gradually the feeling that we were living out in the air, away from the solid earth that most people inhabit—as a man might feel who lived on a scaffold above a city. Clinging to the shoulder of the mountain we lost the assurance of level ground, but gained an inflation of spirit that for the moment measured itself by the standard of these titanic peaks.

Again, we early fell under the illusion that somehow more sunshine, more daylight, was allotted to us than to less fortunate mortals. Each morning we arose in the full sunrise, to look down on the

cañon still dim and gray with dawn. Each evening we cooked supper, in the shadow, it is true, but with sunshine all about us, while plainly the cañon had set its affairs in order for the night. In time the notion took us that thus we, little atoms, were sharing some extra-human privilege with the calm giants all about us; that if we only could grow our souls to meet the rare opportunities here offered us we could enter into and understand the beautiful mysteries that are in the afterglows on the mountains.

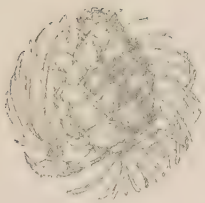
A number of more prosaic considerations were likewise forced upon us. For instance, it took a fearfully long time to boil things, and a deal of hard work to get about, and still more hard work to keep the cooking fire supplied with fuel. After the sun dipped below the horizon, the snow-cold swooped like a hawk, and we soon found ourselves offered the choice

of retirement at an unheard of hour or else prolonged rustling of firewood. Now it happened that some dwarf trees, not over three or four feet high, but thick and twisted and sturdy as gnomes, grew thereabout. We discovered them to be full of pitch, so we just set fire to one each evening. It burned gorgeously, with many colored flames, taking on strange and sinister shapes and likenesses as the coals glowed and blackened and fell. It must have puzzled the frozen monster—if he happened to uncover one sleepy eye —this single tiny star, descended from the heavens, to wink brave as a red jewel on the shoulder of the mountain.

In the night it grew to be very cold, so that the mountains looked brittle, and the sky polished, and the stars snappy like electric sparks. But we had on all the clothes we owned, and our blankets were warm. Tuxana and Pepper crawled

down to nestle at our feet. Far up above we could hear the bell. The horses, as was their custom, would eat all night. Then, guided by some remarkable instinct, they would roost accurately on the first spot to be reached by the sun. There, fur ruffled like velvet, they would wait patiently the chance to warm up and snatch a little sleep.

THE LEDGE



X

THE LEDGE

By shortly after sun-up the next morning Wes and I were out. We carried with us our only implements—the axe and the short-handled shovel. The way we monumented led along the side hill, with some twisting to avoid bad outcrops and boulder stringers; diagonally through the thin grove of lodgepole pines, and by a series of steep lacets down a coarse sand slide to the beginning of the ledge.

Here we proceeded cautiously, clinging to projections of the rocks, and to the twisted bushes growing marvelously in their interstices. The steep grassy strip was slippery, but testing its consistency with the back of the axe we found it solid

and tough. The ten-foot precipice we climbed above, scrambling where even a goat could not have gone. We paid little attention to it for the moment. There would be plenty of time to worry over its difficulties when we had discovered the possibilities beyond.

Them we found rather good. The ledge here became a strip of very steep side hill included between two precipices. That side hill was thick and tangled with stunted brush. serrated with outcropping ledges, unstable with loose and rolling stones, but some sort of a trail through it was merely an affair of time and hard work. One ten-foot slide made us shake our heads a little, for it ended with a right-angled turn. To continue straight ahead meant departure by the balloon route. Finally, we arrived at an almost perpendicular watercourse emerging from a "chimney" in the precipice

above us. It contained but a trickle of very cold, and very grateful, water, but in the melting of the winter snows evidently accommodated a torrent. At any rate, its boulder-filled bottom was some four feet below our level and that of the trail route on the other side.

As I have said, the bottom was boulder-filled, great big round fellows impossible to move. The banks were of cemented rubble and rock impossible to break down without powder. No horse could cross it as it was, and materials for a bridge lacked.

"Never mind," said Wes, "we'll tackle it later."

We crossed to the other side, scrambled around a bend, and found ourselves on a little flat. Just beyond the flat we could see that another steep shale slide began. We walked to the edge and looked. Instead of running off to a jump, as did

every other slide on this mountain, it reached quite down to the round meadow.

"There's our way down," said Wes. "I don't know whether we can get through the cañon; but anyway we'll have horse feed, and wood and water."

We turned back, resolved now on picking our way through more in detail. The watercourse we left for the time being.

Picking a way is good fun. You must first scout ahead in general. Then you determine more carefully just where each hoof is to fall. For instance, it is a question of whether you are to go above or below a certain small ledge. You decide on going below, because thus you will dodge a little climb, and also a rather slippery looking rock slide. But on investigation you find, hidden by the bushes, a riven boulder. There is no way around it. So, then, retrace your steps to the place where you made your first choice. The

upper route again offers you an alternative. You select one; it turns out well; forks again. But you discover both these forks utterly impracticable. So back you must hike to the very beginning to discover, if you can, perhaps a third and heretofore unconsidered chance. Then, if none are good, you must cast in review the features of all your little explorations in order to determine which best lends itself to expedients. This consumes time, but it is great fun.

Wes and I took turns at it. While I picked a way, Wes followed my monuments, constructing trail. Then after a little we changed off.

Making trail for the moment consisted quite simply in cutting brush and rolling rocks out of the way. The latter is hard on the hands. I started out with a pair of "asbestos" gloves, but wore holes in the fingers after half an hour. Then I dis-

covered that the human skin is tougher, although by the end of the morning the ends of my fingers were wearing pretty thin. The round stones rolled off with a prodigious bounce and crash and smell of fire. When they reached the edge they seemed fairly to spring out into the air. After that we knew no more of them, not even by the sound of their hitting, although we listened intently. I suppose the overhang of the cliff threw the sound outward, and then, too, it was a long distance to the bottom. The large flat slabs gave way with a grumbling, slid and slithered sullenly to the edge, and plumped over in a dogged fashion. There were a great many of these, and the trouble was that though they were all solid enough in appearance, most would give way under pressure.

"This trail is a good trail, provided the horses behave," remarked Wes, "but," he

The lake that Wes discovered.

continued, "each animal's got only one stumble coming to him."

By noon we had worked our way back to the break in the ledge. Here we ate lunch. Then we attacked the grass strip on the other side.

This was from a foot to a yard or so in width. We attempted to dig a right-angled notch in it, but found it too tough. Shortly the shovel twisted out of my hands, and as the exact hairline perpendicular was necessary to stay on earth at all, I had to watch it slide gently over the edge. We never heard it hit. After that we tried the back of the axe, but that did not work any better. Finally, we made up our reluctant minds that we would have to use the edge—and we had nothing but a file with which to sharpen it afterward. So, then, we chopped out a way, probably six inches in width, hard and firm enough, and wide enough provided

no one got panicky. This was slow work, and evening caught us just as we connected with the zigzag we had made that morning down the shale.

Next day we attacked the two more difficult problems that remained. First, we cut a log ten inches through and about twelve feet long. To either end of this we attached our riatas. The tree had grown almost at the head of the shale slide. We rolled and dragged and checked and snubbed it down the slide until we came opposite the trail we had made along the ledge. This was no mean undertaking, for the weight was about as much as we could possibly handle even in the best of circumstances, and the circumstances were far from the best. At times it seemed that that log would get away in spite of us, taking our riatas with it. Then by tremendous efforts we would succeed in stopping it against a hidden ledge or a

solid boulder. The thing seemed instinct with malicious life. When, finally, we would get it bedded down against some resting place, we would remove our hats and wipe the sweat from our brows and look about us with a certain astonishment that the landscape was still in place. We would eye that log a little malevolently, and we would be extremely reluctant to wake the resting devil into further movement. But as further movement was necessary, we always had to do it.

And when, finally, we had dragged our huge captive to the notch on the ledge, its disposition abruptly changed. It became sullen. We had to urge it forward an inch or so at a time, by mighty heaves. Its front end gouged down into the soil as though trying to bury itself; it butted against rocks and corners; it hung back like a reluctant dog. And whenever it thought our attention was dis-

tracted, it attempted suddenly to roll off sideways.

We soon discovered that the best method was to apply the motive power from the hinder end and the directing force from the front riata. We took turns, change about, and in what seemed to me at the moment most undue course of time, we arrived at our break in the ledge. The passage had consumed three hours. We were pretty tired, for in addition to having a heavy weight to drag, the possibilities of applying strength on such precarious footing were necessarily limited.

Here we rested. Then I climbed up the face of the mountain twenty feet to where the cliff jutted out. Around the projection I threw the loop of one of the riatas.

Then I crossed above the break to the other side of it. Wes tossed me the end

of the second riata. When I had it, he shoved the log off the ledge. There it hung straight down the granite, dependent from the line I had already made fast to the projection above. Next I took in on the second riata, whereupon, naturally, that end of the log rose to my own level, and the gap was bridged.

There remained now to assure its solidity. I looped a great round boulder on my side. Then we tested every inch of hold of those two ropes, lest they slide or abrade. Wes crossed first over the new bridge, and so we went on to our second problem, well pleased with our solution of the first.

The gully we decided we would have to fill. A certain number of loose boulders and stones lay ready to our hands, but the supply of these was soon used up. We then had to carry our materials from greater or lesser distances as we could

find them. This was plain hard work, at which we sweated and toiled until we had moved a few tons of granite. Then we chinked our stone bridge with smaller splinters until we considered it safe.

On the way home we paused at the log to throw sods in the crack between it and the granite apron. This was not for greater solidity, but merely to reassure our horses somewhat by making it look more like a trail.

We arrived in camp after sundown dead weary, but rejoiced to find that Billy had cooked us a good supper. The evening was a short one, and almost before the frozen monster had blended with the night, we crawled between the blankets.

Sun-up found Wes and me scrambling a thousand feet above camp, shortwinded, breakfastless and disgruntled. Of course, the horses had strayed—they always do when you have a particularly hard day be-

fore you. Also they invariably stray uphill. I remember once climbing four thousand feet after Dinkey. She was plodding calmly through granite shale, and had passed by good feed to get there. Why, I do not know. However, in this case we could not much blame them for seeking feed where they could, only it did seem a little unnecessary that they should be at the *upper* edge of that patch of lupins.

So we took a parting look at the snow and granite where rose the Kaweah, and the frowning black steeps of the Kaweah Group opposite, and the frozen monster sprawled in his age-long sleep. First, we rode to the shale slide. Then we led to the beginning of the ledge. Then we tied up, and began the rather arduous task of leading our animals along it one by one.

Of course, Bullet had the honor of precedence. The mere ledge was easy to him, for the footing was good enough,

though limited in quantity. A misstep would have tragic consequences, but there existed no real excuse for a mountain pony's misstepping. At the log he hesitated a little; but as I walked boldly out on it, he concluded it must be all right, and so followed gingerly. After a time we reached the rounded knoll, where trouble ended. I tied him to a bush and went back for another animal. By ten o'clock everybody, including Billy, had crossed in safety. We resumed the saddle, and turned sharp to the left for what now amounted to a thousand-foot descent.

It was steep, and loose. Sometimes it seemed that the horses were going to stand on their heads. Often they slid for twenty feet, unable to do anything but keep their balance, a merry, bouncing little avalanche preceding them, their hoofs sinking deeper and deeper in the shale,

until at last the very accumulation would bring them up. Then they would take another step. None but horses raised to the business could have done it. They straddled thin ledges, stepped tentatively, kept their wits about them. After a long time we found ourselves among big, rugged cliff débris. We looked up to discover what in the absorption of the descent we had not realized—that we had reached the bottom.

With one accord we turned in our saddles. The ledge showed as a slender filament of green threading the gray of the mountain.

With some pains we made way through the fringe of jagged rock, and so came to the meadow. It was nearly circular in shape, comprised perhaps two hundred acres, and lay in a cup of granite. The cup was lipped at the lower end, but even there the rock rose considerably above the

level of the grasses. We were surprised to note that the round lake, which from above seemed directly adjacent to the meadow, was nowhere to be seen. Evidently it lay beyond the low stone rim down the cañon.

We rode out through the rich grasses, belly high to the horses. No animal grazed there, except the deer. The stream divided below the plunge from above to meander in a dozen sod-banked creeks here and there through the meadow, only to reunite where the lip of the cup was riven.

We rode to the top of the rock rim. The lake was indeed just beyond, but at least five hundred feet lower. We looked over a sheer precipice, which, nevertheless, had remained quite invisible from our side hill camp. This was serious. We hitched the horses in some lodgepole pines, and separated to explore.

I found that the precipice continued to the very hind foot of the frozen monster. At one point a deep gorge opened passage to the river. A smoke of mist ascended from it dense as steam; the black rocks dripped; jagged monsters appeared and disappeared beyond the veil. Obviously nothing but a parachute would avail here.

Wes reported a steep side mountain, covered with brush, loose stones and rock slides, around which it might be possible to scramble. We proceeded to do so. The journey was rough. To our right and above stood monoliths of stone, sharp and hard against the very blue sky of the high altitudes. They watched us stumbling and jumping and falling at their feet. After a great deal of work and a very long time we skirted that lake—five hundred feet above it—and found where the precipice had relented, and so made our way down to its level.

Twice more we accomplished these long jumps from one terraced meadow to another. The sheer cliff walls rose higher and higher above us, shutting out the mountain peaks. By three o'clock it had become late afternoon. The horses were tired; so were we. We should have camped, but the strong desire to see the thing through grew on us. We were now in the bottom, where grew alders and willows and cottonwoods. Occasionally we came across the tracks of the wild cattle of the mountains.

And then the river dropped again over a fall; and we had to climb and climb and climb again until we had regained the sunlight. A broad, sloping ridge, grown thick with quaking asp, offered itself. We rode along it, dodging branches, blinded by leaves, unable to see underfoot. Abruptly we burst from them into a deep pine woods, soft and still.

The thin black line across the face of the cliff is the ledge by which we descended.

THE LEDGE

I was riding ahead. The woods stretched before me as far as I could see. I eased myself in my saddle. Somewhere ahead the route from the Giant Forest to Mineral King ran at right angles. Some time we would cross it.

And then, without warning, there appeared, almost under my horse's hoofs, a deep, dusty brown furrow. I reined in, staring. It did not seem possible that the thing should have happened so quietly. Subconsciously I must have anticipated some pomp and blare of trumpets to herald so important an event. The appearance of this dusty brown furrow, winding down through the trees, represented so much labor of mind and body, so much uncertainty, so many discomforts, so many doubts and fears and hopes! And now it came into view as simply as a snow plant or a fallen pine cone. All we had to do was to turn to the left. By that act

we stepped from the great shining land of adventure and high emprise to the every-day life of the many other travelers who had worn deep the furrow. For this was the Trail.

APPENDIX

On re-reading the chapters of The Pass it has occurred to me that some might imagine that we consider the opening of *Elizabeth Pass* an extraordinary feat. This is not true. Anybody could have done it. I have attempted merely to show how such things are undertaken, and to tell of the joys and petty but real difficulties to be met with on such an expedition. I hope the reader will take this account in that spirit.

FIELD NOTES

Regular trail into Roaring River.

Ascend west fork of river; proceed by monumented and blazed miner's trail to cirque at end of cañon.

When a short distance below the large falls, at a brown, smooth rock in creek bed, turn sharp to left-hand trail.

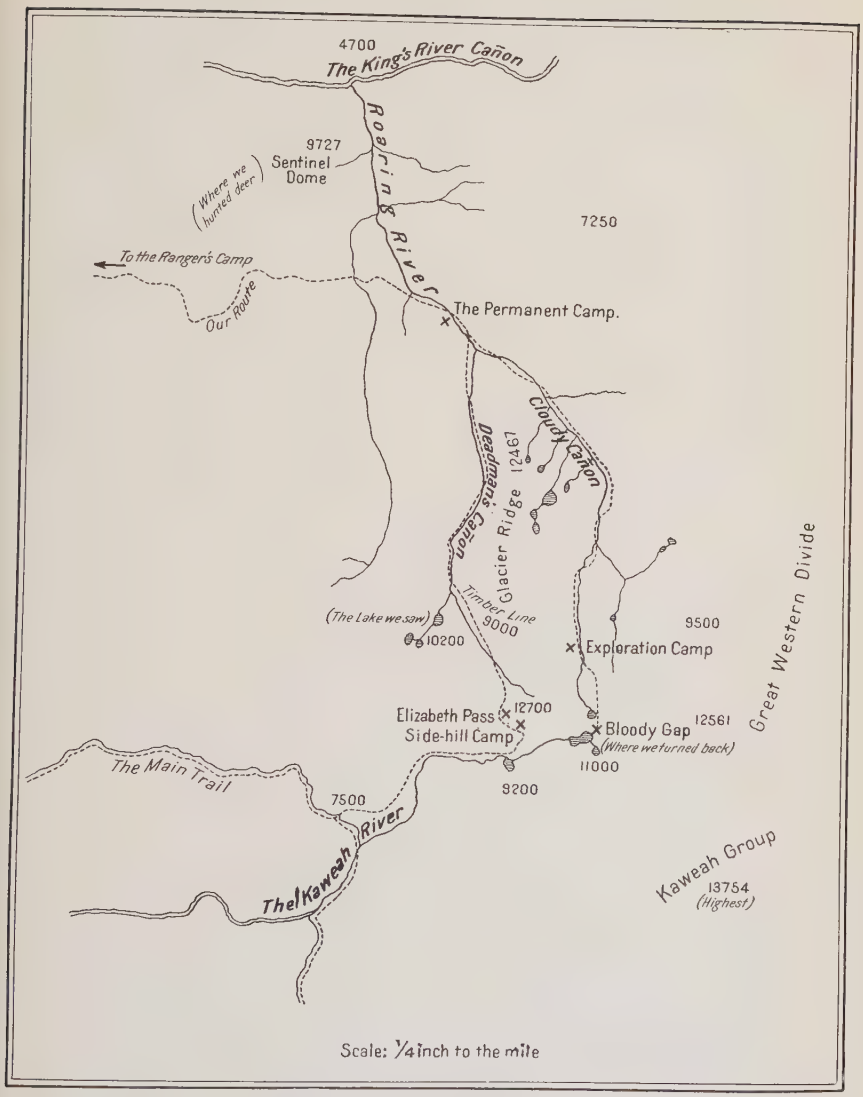
Climb mountain by miner's trail to old mine camp.

If snow is heavy above this point, work a way to large monument in gap. The east edge of snow is best.

From gap follow monuments down first lateral red ridge to east. This ridge ends in a granite knob. The monuments lead at first on the west slope of the ridge, then down the backbone to within about two or three hundred yards of the granite knob. Turn down east slope of ridge to the watercourse. Follow west side of watercourse to a good crossing, then down shale to grove of lodgepole pines. Cross west through trees to blaze in second grove to westward above lake. Follow monuments to slide rock on ledge. Best way across is to lash a log, as we did. Follow monuments to knoll west of first watercourse. Turn sharp to left down lateral ridge for about one

hundred feet. Cross arroyo to west, and work down shale to round meadow.

From meadow proceed through clump of lodge-pole pines to northwest. Keep well up on side hill, close under cliffs. Cross the rock apron in little cañon above second meadow. Work down shale ridge to west side of the jump off below second meadow. At foot of jump off pass small round pond-hole. Strike directly toward stream, and follow monumented trail.


4700
The King's River Cañon
Roaring River
9727
Sentinel Dome
(Where we hunted deer)
7250
To the Ranger's Camp
Our Route
The Permanent Camp.
Deadmans Canon
Cloudy Canon
12467
Glacier Ridge
Timber Line 9000
(The Lake we saw)
10200
9500
Exploration Camp
Great Western Divide
Elizabeth Pass
Side-hill Camp
12700
Bloody Gap
12561
(Where we turned back)
11000
9200
The Main Trail
7500
The Kaweah River
Kaweah Group
13754
(Highest)
Scale: 1/4 inch to the mile

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